







ELIZABETH BARRETT BROWNING

*From a Photograph by Walker & Cockerell, after the Drawing by Talford*

POETICAL WORKS  
OF  
ELIZABETH BARRETT  
BROWNING

WITH TWO PROSE ESSAYS



HUMPHREY MILFORD  
OXFORD UNIVERSITY PRESS  
LONDON EDINBURGH GLASGOW NEW YORK  
TORONTO MELBOURNE CAPE TOWN BOMBAY

1920



# DEDICATION

## TO MY FATHER

WHEN your eyes fall upon this page of dedication, and you start to see to whom it is inscribed, your first thought will be of the time far off when I was a child and wrote verses, and when I dedicated them to you who were my public and my critic. Of all that such a recollection implies of saddest and sweetest to both of us, it would become neither of us to speak before the world; nor would it be possible for us to speak of it to one another, with voices that did not falter. Enough, that what is in my heart when I write thus, will be fully known to yours.

And my desire is that you, who are a witness how if this art of poetry had been a less earnest object to me, it must have fallen from exhausted hands before this day,—that you, who have shared with me in things bitter and sweet, softening or enhancing them, every day,—that you, who hold with me over all sense of loss and transiency, one hope by one Name,—may accept from me the inscription of these volumes, the exponents of a few years of an existence which has been sustained and comforted by you as well as given. Somewhat more faint-hearted than I used to be, it is my fancy thus to seem to return to a visible personal dependence on you, as if indeed I were a child again; to conjure your beloved image between myself and the public, so as to be sure of one smile,—and to satisfy my heart while I sanctify my ambition, by associating with the great pursuit of my life its tenderest and holiest affection.

Your

E. B. B.



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# EARLY POEMS, 1820-33

## THE BATTLE OF MARATHON<sup>1</sup>

Behold  
What care employs me now, my vows I pay  
To the sweet Muses, teachers of my youth!—AKENSIDE.

Ancient of days! August Athena! Where,  
Where are thy men of might, thy grand in soul?  
Gone—glimmering through the dream of things that were.  
First in the race that led to glory's goal,  
They won, and passed away.—BYRON.

### PREFACE

THAT poetry is the first, and most celebrated of all the fine arts, has not been denied in any age, or by any philosopher. The culture of the soul, which Sallust so nobly describes, is necessary to those refined pleasures, and elegant enjoyments, in which man displays his superiority to brutes. It is alone the elevation of the soul, not the form of the body, which constitutes the proud distinction; according to the learned historian, 'Alterum nobis cum diis, alterum cum belluis commune est.' The noblest of the productions of man, that which inspires the enthusiasm of virtue, the energy of truth, is poetry: poetry elevates the mind to heaven, kindles within it unwonted fires, and bids it throb with feelings exalting to its nature.

This humble attempt may by some be unfortunately attributed to vanity, to an affectation of talent, or to the still more absurd desire of being thought a *genius*. With the humility and deference due to their judgements, I wish to plead not

guilty to their accusations, and, with submission, to offer these pages to the perusal of the few kind and partial friends who may condescend to read them, assured that their criticism will be tempered with mercy.

Happily it is not now, as it was in the days of Pope, who was so early in actual danger of thinking himself 'the greatest genius of the age.' Now, even the female may drive her Pegasus through the realms of Parnassus, without being saluted with the most equivocal of all appellations, a learned lady; without being celebrated by her friends as a Sappho, or traduced by her enemies as a pedant; without being abused in the Review, or criticized in society; how justly then may a child hope to pass unheeded!

In these reading days there need be little vulgar anxiety among poets for the fate of their works: the public taste is no longer so epicurean. As the press pours forth profusion, the literary multitude eagerly receive its lavish offerings, while the sublimity of Homer, and the majesty of Virgil, those grand and solitary specimens of ancient poetic excellence, so renowned through the lapse of ages, are by many read only as schoolbooks, and are justly estimated alone by the comparative

<sup>1</sup> Dedication to the original edition of 1820: 'To him to whom "I owe the most," and whose admonitions have guided my youthful muse, even from her earliest infancy, to the Father whose never-failing kindness, whose unwearied affection, I never can repay, I offer these pages as a small testimony of the gratitude of his affectionate child, ELIZABETH B. BARRETT.'

## THE BATTLE OF MARATHON

whose hearts can be touched by the grandeur of their sentiments, or exalted by their kindred fire; by them this dereliction must be felt, but they can do no more than mourn over this semblance of decline in literary judgement and poetic taste. Yet, in contemplating the poets of our own times—(for there are real poets, though they be mingled with an inferior multitude of the common herd)—who, unsophisticated by prejudice, can peruse those inspired pages emitted from the soul of Byron, or who can be dazzled by the gems sparkling from the rich mine of the imagination of Moore, or captivated by scenes glowing in the descriptive powers of Scott, without a proud consciousness that our day may boast the exuberance of true poetic genius? And if criticism be somewhat too general in its suffrage, may it not be attributed to an overwhelming abundance of contemporary authors, which induces it to err in discrimination, and may cause its praises to be frequently ill-merited, and its censures ill-deserved; as the eye, wandering over a garden where flowers are mingled with weeds, harassed by exertion and dimmed by the brilliancy of colours, frequently mistakes the flower for the weed, and the weed for the flower?

It is worthy of remark, that when Poetry first burst from the mists of ignorance—when first she shone a bright star illuminating the then narrow understanding of the Greeks—from that period when Homer, the sublime poet of antiquity, awoke the first notes of poetic inspiration to the praise of valour, honour, patriotism, and, best of all, to a sense of the high attributes of the Deity, though darkly and mysteriously revealed; then it was, and not till then, that the seed of every virtue, of every great quality, which had so long lain dormant in the souls of the Greeks, burst into the germ; as when the sun disperses the mist cowering o'er the face of the heavens, illumines with his resplendent rays the whole creation, and speaks to the verdant beauties of nature, joy, peace, and gladness. Then it was that Greece began to give those immortal examples of exalted feeling, and of patriotic virtue, which have since astonished the world; then it was

that the unenlightened soul of the savage rose above the degradation which assimilated him to the brute creation, and discovered the first rays of social independence, and of limited freedom; not the freedom of barbarism, but that of a state enlightened by a wise jurisdiction, and restrained by civil laws. From that period man seems to have first proved his resemblance to his Creator, and his superiority to brutes, and the birth of Poetry was that of all the kindred arts; in the words of Cicero, 'Quo minus ergo honoris erat poetis eo minora studia fuerunt.'

It is no disparagement to an historical poem to enlarge upon its subject; but where truth is materially outraged, it ceases to be history. Homer, in his *Iliad* and *Odyssey*, and Virgil, in his *Aeneid*, have greatly beautified their subjects, so grand in themselves, and, with true poetic taste and poetic imagery, have contributed with magnificent profusion to adorn those incidents which otherwise would appear tame, barren, and uninteresting. It is certain, however happily they have succeeded, their poems cannot be called strictly historical, because the truth of history is not altogether their undeveloped form. Virgil, especially, has introduced in his *Aeneid* 'an anachronism of nearly three hundred years, Dido having fled from Phœnicia that period after the age of Aeneas.' But in that dependence upon the truth of history which I would enforce as a necessary quality in an historical poem, I do not mean to insinuate that it should be mere prose versified, or a suspension of the functions of the imagination, for then it could no longer be poetry. It is evident that an historical poem should possess the following qualifications:—Imagination, invention, judgement, taste, and truth; the four first are necessary to poetry, the latter to history. He who writes an historical poem must be directed by the pole-star of history, truth; his path may be laid beneath the bright sun of invention, amongst the varied walks of imagination, with judgement and taste for his guides, but his goal must be that resplendent and unchangeable luminary, truth.

Imagination must be allowed to be the

characteristic, and invention the very foundation, of poetry. The necessity of the latter in all poetic effusions is established by that magnificent translator of the greatest of poets, Pope, in this beautiful passage: 'It is the invention that in different degrees distinguishes all great geniuses: the utmost extent of human study, learning, and industry, which masters everything besides, can never attain to this. It furnishes art with all her materials, and without it, judgement itself can but steal wisely; for art is only a prudent steward, who lives on managing the riches of nature.' And in this ingenious note the editor, Mr. Wakefield, elegantly exemplifies it: 'For poetry, in its proper acceptation, is absolutely creation, *ποίησις* or invention. In the three requisites prescribed by Horace of poetic excellence, "*Ingenium cui sit cui mens divinior atque os magna sonaturum.*" The first, "*ingenium*," or native fertility of intellect, corresponds to the "*invention*" of Pope.'

The battle of Marathon is not, perhaps, a subject calculated to exercise the powers of the imagination, or of poetic fancy, the incidents being so limited; but it is a subject every way formed to call forth the feelings of the heart, to awake the strongest passions of the soul. Who can be indifferent, who can preserve his tranquillity, when he hears of one little city rising undaunted, and daring her innumerable enemies, in defence of her freedom—of a handful of men overthrowing the invaders, who sought to molest their rights and to destroy their liberties? Who can hear unmoved of such an example of heroic virtue, of patriotic spirit, which seems to be crying from the ruins of Athens for honour and immortality? The heart, which cannot be fired by such a recital, must be cold as the icy waters of the Pole, and must be devoid at once of manly feeling and of patriotic virtue; for what is it that can awaken the high feelings which sometimes lie dormant in the soul of man, if it be not liberty? Liberty, beneath whose fostering sun the arts, genius, every congenial talent of the mind, spring up spontaneously, and unite in forming one bright garland

of glory around the brow of independence; liberty, at whose decline virtue sinks before the despotic sway of licentiousness, effeminacy, and vice. At the fall of liberty, the immortal Republics of Rome and Athens became deaf to the call of glory, fame, and manly virtue. 'On vit manifestement (says Montesquieu) pendant le peu de temps que dura la tyrannie des decenvirs, à quel point l'agrandissement de Rome dependoit de sa liberté; l'état sembla avoir perdu l'âme qui la faisoit mouvoir.' And Bigland thus: 'It was not till luxury had corrupted their manners, and their liberties were on the eve of their extinction, that the principal citizens of Athens and of Rome began to construct magnificent houses, and to display their opulence and splendour in private life.'

It may be objected to my little poem, that the mythology of the ancients is too much called upon to support the most considerable incidents; it may unhappily offend those feelings most predominant in the breast of a Christian, or it may be considered as injudicious in destroying the simplicity so necessary to the epic. Glover's *Leonidas* is commended by Lyttelton, because he did not allow himself the liberty so largely taken by his predecessors, of 'wandering beyond the bounds, and out of sight, of common sense in the airy regions of poetic mythology'; yet, where is the poet more remarkable for simplicity than Homer, and where is the author who makes more frequent use of heathen mythology? 'The heathens,' says Rollin, 'addressed themselves to their gods, as beings worthy of adoration.'

He who writes an epic poem must transport himself to the scene of action; he must imagine himself possessed of the same opinions, manners, prejudices, and beliefs; he must suppose himself to be the hero he delineates, or his picture can no longer be nature, and what is not natural cannot please. It would be considered ridiculous in the historian or poet describing the ancient manners of Greece, to address himself to that Omnipotent Being who first called the world out of chaos, nor would it be considered less so if he were to be silent upon the whole subject; for

in all nations, in all ages, religion must be the spur of every noble action, and the characteristic of every lofty soul.

Perhaps I have chosen the rimes of Pope, and departed from the noble simplicity of the Miltonic verse, injudiciously. The immortal poet of England, in his apology for the verse of *Paradise Lost*, declares 'rimes to be, to all judicious ears, trivial, and of no true musical delight.' In my opinion, humble as it is, the custom of riming would ere now have been abolished amongst poets, had not Pope, the disciple of the immortal Dryden, awakened the lyre to music, and proved that rime could equal blank verse in simplicity and gracefulness, and vie with it in elegance of composition, and in sonorous melody. No one who has read his translation of Homer, can refuse him the immortality which he merits so well, and for which he laboured so long. He it was who planted rime for ever in the regions of Parnassus, and uniting elegance with strength, and sublimity with beauty, raised the English language to the highest excellence of smoothness and purity.

I confess that I have chosen Homer for a model, and perhaps I have attempted to imitate his style too often and too closely; and yet some imitation is authorized by poets immortalized in the annals of Parnassus, whose memory will be revered as long as man has a soul to appreciate their merits. Virgil's magnificent description of the storm in the first book of the *Aeneid* is almost literally translated from Homer, where Ulysses, quitting the Isle of Calypso for 'Phaeacia's dusty shore,' is overwhelmed by Neptune. That sublime picture, 'Ponto nox incubat atra,' and the beautiful apostrophe, 'O terque quaterque beati,' is a literal translation of the same incident in Homer. There are

many other imitations, which it would be unnecessary and tedious here to enumerate. Even Milton, the pride and glory of English taste, has not disdained to replenish his imagination from the abundant fountains of the first and greatest of poets. It would have been both absurd and presumptuous, young and inexperienced as I am, to have attempted to strike out a path for myself, and to have wandered among the varied windings of Parnassus, without a guide to direct my steps, or to warn me from those fatal quicksands of literary blunders, in which, even with the best guide, I find myself so frequently immersed. There is no humility, but rather folly, in taking inferiority for a model, and there is no vanity, but rather wisdom, in following humbly the footsteps of perfection; for who would prefer quenching his thirst at the stagnant pool, when he may drink the pure waters of the fountain-head? Thus, then, however unworthily, I have presumed to select, from all the poets of ancient or modern ages, Homer, the most perfect of the votaries of Apollo, whom every nation has contributed to immortalize, to celebrate, and to admire.

If I have in these pages proved what I desired, that poetry is the parent of liberty, and of all the fine arts, and if I have succeeded in clearing up some of the obscurities of my little poem, I have attained my only object; but if on the contrary I have failed, it must be attributed to my incapacity, and not to my inclination. Either way, it would be useless to proceed further, for nothing can be more true than the declaration of Bigland, 'that a good book seldom requires, and a worthless never deserves, a long preface.'

HOPE END, 1819.

# THE BATTLE OF MARATHON

## BOOK I

THE war of Greece with Persia's haughty King,  
 No vulgar strain, eternal Goddess, sing!  
 What dreary ghosts to glutt'd Pluto fled,  
 What nations suffered, and what heroes bled:  
 Sing Asia's powerful Prince, who envious saw  
 The fame of Athens, and her might in war;  
 And scorns her power, at Cytherea's call  
 Her ruin plans, and meditates her fall;  
 How Athens, blinded to th' approaching chains  
 By Vulcan's artful spouse, unmoved remains;  
 Deceived by Venus thus, unconquered Greece  
 Forgot her glories in the lap of peace;  
 While Asia's realms and Asia's lord prepare  
 T' ensnare her freedom by the wiles of war:  
 Hippiaſt' exalt upon th' Athenian throne,  
 Where once Piſiſtratus his father shone.  
 For yet her son Aeneas' wrongs impart  
 Revenge and grief to Cytherea's heart;  
 And still from smoking Troy's oncesacred wall  
 Does Priam's reeking shade for vengeance call.  
 Minerva saw, and Paphia's Queen defied,  
 A boon she begged, nor Jove the boon denied;  
 That Greece should rise triumphant o'er her foe,  
 Disarm th' invaders, and their power o'erthrow.  
 Her prayer obtained, the blue-eyed Goddess flies  
 As the fierce eagle, thro' the radiant skies.  
 To Ariſtides then she stood confessed,  
 Shows Persia's arts, and fires his warlike breast:  
 Then pours celestial ardour o'er his frame,  
 And points the way to glory and to fame.

Awe struck the Chief, and swells his troubled soul,  
 In pride and wonder thoughts progressive roll.  
 He inly groaned and smote his labouring breast,  
 At once by Pallas and by care oppress.  
 Inspired he moved, earth echoed where he trod,  
 All full of Heaven, all burning with the God.  
 Th' Athenians viewed with awe the mighty man,  
 To whom the Chief impassioned thus began:  
 'Hear, all ye Sons of Greece! Friends, Fathers, hear!  
 The Gods command it, and the Gods revere!  
 No madness mine, for mark, O favoured Greeks!  
 That by my mouth the martial Goddess speaks!  
 This know, Athenians, that proud Persia now  
 Prepares to twin ethyl laurels on her brow;  
 Behold her princely Chiefs their weapons wield,  
 By Venus fired, and shake the brazen shield.  
 I hear their shouts that echo to the skies,  
 I see their lances blaze, their banners rise,  
 I hear the clash of arms, the battle's roar,  
 And all the din and thunder of the war!  
 I know that Greeks shall purchase just renown,  
 And fame impartial shall Athena crown.  
 Then Greeks, prepare your arms! award the yoke,  
 Thus Jove commands.'—Sublime the hero spoke;  
 The Greeks assent with shouts, and rend the skies  
 With martial clamour and tumultuous cries.  
 So struggling winds with rage indignant sweep  
 The azure waters of the silent deep,

Sudden the seas rebellowing, frightful  
 rise,  
 And dash their foaming surges to the  
 skies;  
 Burst the firm sand, and boil with dread-  
 ful roar,  
 Lift their black waves, and combat with  
 the shore.  
 So each brave Greek in thought aspires  
 to fame,  
 Stung by his words, and dread of future  
 shame;  
 Glory's own fires within their bosom  
 rise,  
 And shouts tumultuous thunder to the  
 skies.  
 But Love's celestial Queen resentful saw  
 The Greeks (by Pallas warned) prepare  
 for war;  
 Th' indignant Goddess of the Paphian  
 bower  
 Deceives Themistocles with heavenly  
 power;  
 The hero, rising, spoke: 'O rashly blind,  
 What sudden fury thus has seized thy  
 mind?  
 Boy as thou art, such empty dreams be-  
 ware!  
 Shall we for griefs and wars unsought  
 prepare?  
 The will of mighty Jove, whate'er it be,  
 Obey, and own th' Omnipotent decree.  
 If our disgrace and fall the fates employ,  
 Why did we triumph o'er perfidious  
 Troy?  
 Why, say, O Chief, in that eventful hour  
 Did Grecian heroes crush Dardanian  
 power?'  
 Him eyeing sternly, thus the Greek  
 replies,  
 Renowned for truth, and as Minerva  
 wise:  
 'O Son of Greece, no heedless boy am I,  
 Despised in battle's toils, nor first to fly,  
 Nor dreams or frenzy call my words  
 astray,  
 The heaven-sent mandate pious I obey.  
 If Pallas did not all my words inspire,  
 May heaven pursue me with unceasing  
 ire!  
 But if (oh, grant my prayer, almighty  
 Jove)  
 I bear a mandate from the Courts above,

Then thro' yon heaven let awful thunder  
 roar  
 Till Greeks believe my mission, and  
 adore!  
 He ceased—and thro' the host one  
 murmur ran,  
 With eyes transfixed upon the godlike  
 man.  
 But hark! o'er earth expands the  
 solemn sound;  
 It lengthening grows—heaven's azure  
 vaults resound,  
 While peals of thunder beat the echoing  
 ground.  
 Prostrate, convinced, divine Themisto-  
 cles  
 Embraced the hero's hands, and clasped  
 his knees:  
 'Behold me here' (the awe-struck  
 Chieftain cries,  
 While tears repentant glisten in his eyes),  
 'Behold me here, thy friendship to en-  
 treat,  
 Themistocles, a suppliant at thy feet.  
 Before no haughty despot's royal throne  
 This knee has bent—it bends to thee  
 alone,  
 Thy mission to adore, thy truth to own.  
 Behold me, Jove, and witness what I  
 swear  
 By all on earth I love, by all in heaven  
 I fear:  
 Some fiend inspired my words of dark  
 design,  
 Some fiend concealed beneath a robe  
 divine;  
 Then aid me in my prayer, ye Gods  
 above,  
 Bid Aristides give me back his love!'  
 He spake and wept; benign the godlike  
 man  
 Felt tears descend, and paused, then thus  
 began:  
 'Thrice worthy Greek, for this shall we  
 contend?  
 Ah no! I feel thy worth, thou more than  
 friend.  
 Pardon sincere, Themistocles, receive;  
 The heart declares 'tis easy to forgive.'  
 He spake divine, his eye with Pallas  
 burns,  
 He spoke and sighed, and sighed and  
 wept by turns.

Themistocles beheld the Chief oppress,  
Awe-struck he paused, then rushed upon  
his breast,

Whom sage Miltiades with joy addressed :  
' Hero of Greece, worthy a hero's name,  
Adored by Athens, fav'rite child of fame!  
Glory's own spirit does with truth combine

To form a soul so godlike, so divine !  
O Aristides, rise, our Chief ! to save  
The fame, the might of Athens from the  
grave.

Nor then refuse thy noble arm to lend  
To guard Athena, and her state defend.  
First I, obedient, 'customed homage pay  
To own a hero's and a leader's sway.'

He said, and would have knelt ; the man  
divine

Perceived his will, and stayed the Sire's  
design.

' Not mine, O Sage, to lead this gallant  
band,'

He generous said, and grasped his aged  
hand,

' Proud as I am in glory's arms to rise,  
Athenian Greeks, to shield your liberties,  
Yet 'tis not mine to lead your powerful  
state,

Enough it is to tempt you to be great ;  
Be't for Miltiades, experienced sage,  
To curb your ardour and restrain your  
rage,

Your souls to temper—by his skill prepare  
To succour Athens, and conduct the  
war.

More fits my early youth to purchase  
fame

By deeds in arms t' immortalize my name.'  
Firmly he spake, his words the Greek  
inspire,

And all were hushed to listen and admire.  
The Sage thus : ' Most Allied to Gods !  
the fame,

The pride, the glory of the Grecian name,  
E'en by thee, Chief, I swear, to whom  
is given

The sacred mandate of yon marble  
heaven —

To lead, not undeserving of thy love,  
T' avert the yoke, if so determines Jove.'  
Amidst the host imagination rose  
And paints the combat, but disdains the  
woes.

And heaven-born fancy, with dishevelled  
hair,

Points to the ensanguined field, and  
victory there.

But soon, too soon, these empty dreams  
are driven

Forth from their breasts. But soothing  
hope is given :

Hope sprung from Jove, man's sole and  
envied heaven.

Then all his glory Aristides felt,  
And begged the Chieftain's blessing as  
he knelt :

Miltiades his pious arms outspread,  
Called Jove's high spirit on the hero's  
head ;

Nor called unheard—sublime in upper  
air

The bird of Jove appeared to bless his  
prayer.

Lightning he breathed, not harsh, not  
fiercely bright,

But one pure stream of heaven-collected  
light :

Jove's sacred smile lulls every care to  
rest,

Calms every woe, and gladdens every  
breast.

But what shrill blast thus bursts upon the  
ear ?

What banners rise, what heralds' forms  
appear ?

That haughty mien, and that commanding  
face

Bespeak them Persians, and of noble  
race ;

One on whose hand Darius' signet  
beamed,

Superior to the rest, a leader seemed,  
With brow contracted and with flashing  
eye

Thus threatening spoke, in scornful  
majesty :

' Know Greeks that I, a sacred herald,  
bring

The awful mandate of the Persian King,  
To force allegiance from the sons of  
Greece ;

Then earth and water give, nor scorn his  
peace.

For if, for homage, back reproof I bear,  
To meet his wrath, his vengeful wrath,  
prepare ;

For not in vain ye scorn his dread command

When Asia's might comes thundering in his hand.

To whom Miltiades with kindling eye :  
'We scorn Darius, and his threats defy ;  
And now, proud herald, shall we stoop to shame ?

Shall Athens tremble at a tyrant's name ?  
Persian, away ! such idle dreams forbear,  
And shun our anger and our vengeance fear.'

'Oh ! vain thy words,' the herald fierce began ;

'Thrice vain thy dotaged words, O powerless man,

Sons of a desert, hoping to withstand  
All the joint forces of Darius' hand ;  
Fools, fools, the King of millions to defy,  
For freedom's empty name to ask to die !  
Yet stay, till Persia's powers their banners rear,

Then shall ye learn our forces to revere,  
And ye, O impotent, shall deign to fear !  
To whom great Aristides : rising ire  
Boiled in his breast, and set his soul on fire :

'O wretch accurst,' the hero cried, 'to seek

T' insult experienced age, t' insult a Greek !

Inglorious slave ! whom truth and heaven deny,

Unfit to live, yet more unfit to die :

But, trained to pass the goblet at the board  
And servile kiss the footsteps of thy lord,  
Whose wretched life no glorious deeds beguile,

Who lives upon the semblance of a smile,  
Die ! thy base shade to gloomy regions fled,

Join there the shivering phantoms of the dead.

Base slave, return to dust !' His victim then

In fearful accents cried : 'O best of men,  
Most loved of Gods, most merciful, most just,

Behold me humbled, grovelling in the dust :

Not mine th' offence, the mandate stern I bring

From great Darius, Asia's tyrant King.

Oh, strike not, Chief ; not mine the guilt, not mine.

Ah, o'er those brows severe let mercy shine,

So dear to heaven, of origin divine !  
Tributes, lands, gold, shall wealthy Persia give.

All, and yet more, but bid me, wretched, live !'

He trembling, thus persuades with fond entreat

And nearer pressed, and clasped the hero's feet.

Forth from the Grecian's breast all rage is driven,

He lifts his arms, his eyes, his soul to heaven.

'Hear, Jove omnipotent, all wise, all great,

To whom all fate is known, whose will is fate ;

Hear, thou all-seeing one, hear, Sire divine,

Teach me thy will, and be thy wisdom mine !

Behold this suppliant ! life or death decree ;

Be thine the judgement, for I bend to thee.'

And thus the Sire of Gods and men replies,  
While pealing thunder shakes the groaning skies ;

The awful voice thro' spheres unknown was driven,

Resounding thro' the dark'ning realms of heaven ;

Aloft in air sublime the echo rode,  
And earth resounds the glory of the God :

'Son of Athena, let the coward die,  
And his pale ghost to Pluto's empire fly ;

Son of Athena, our command obey,  
Know thou our might, and then adore our sway.'

Th' Almighty spake—the heavens convulsive start,

From the black clouds the whizzing lightnings dart

And dreadful dance along the troubled sky,

Struggling with fate in awful mystery.

The hero heard, and Jove his breast inspired,

Nor now by pity touched, but anger fired ;

While his big heart within his bosom  
burns,  
Off from his feet the clinging slave he  
spurns.  
Vain were his cries, his prayers 'gainst  
fate above,  
Jove wills his fall, and who can strive  
with Jove?  
To whom the hero : 'Hence to Pluto's  
sway,  
To realms of night ne'er lit by Cynthia's  
ray ;  
Hence—from yon gulf the earth and  
water bring  
And crown with victory your mighty  
King.'  
He said ; and where the gulf of death  
appeared,  
Where raging waves, with rocks sub-  
limely reared,  
He hurled the wretch, at once of hope  
bereaved ;  
Struggling he fell, the roaring flood re-  
ceived.  
E'en now for life his shrieks, his groans  
implore,  
And now death's latent agony is o'er,  
He struggling sinks, and sinks to rise no  
more.  
The train, amazed, behold their herald  
die,  
And Greece in arms—they tremble and  
they fly.  
So some fair herd upon the verdant  
mead  
See by the lion's jaws their foremost  
bleed ;  
Fearful they fly, lest what revolving fate  
Had doomed their leader, should them-  
selves await.  
Then shouts of glorious war and fame  
resound,  
Athena's brazen gates receive the lofty  
sound.  
But she whom Paphia's radiant climes  
adore  
From her own bower the work of Pallas  
saw :  
Tumultuous thoughts within her bosom  
rise,  
She calls her car, and at her will it flies.  
Th' eternal car with gold celestial burns,  
Its polished wheel on brazen axle turns :

This to his spouse by Vulcan's self was  
given,  
An offering worthy of the forge of heaven.  
The Goddess mounts the seat and seized  
the reins,  
The doves celestial cut th' aerial plains ;  
Before the sacred birds and car of gold  
Self-moved the radiant gates of heaven  
unfold.  
She then dismounts, and thus to mighty  
Jove  
Begins the Mother and the Queen of  
Love :  
'And is it thus, O Sire, that fraud should  
spring  
From the pure breast of heaven's eternal  
King ?  
Was it for this Saturnius' word was given  
That Greece should fall 'mong nations  
curst of heaven ?  
Thou swore by hell's black flood, and  
heaven above ;  
Is this, oh say, is this the faith of Jove ?  
Behold stern Pallas Athens' sons alarms,  
Darius' herald crushed, and Greece in  
arms ;  
E'en now behold her crested streamers  
fly,  
Each Greek resolved to triumph or to die.  
Ah me, unhappy ! when shall sorrow  
cease ?  
Too well I know the fatal might of Greece ;  
Was't not enough imperial Troy should  
fall,  
That Argive hands should raze the god-  
built wall ?  
Was't not enough Anchises' son should  
roam  
Far from his native shore and much-loved  
home ?  
All this, unconscious of thy fraud, I bore ;  
For thou, O Sire, t' allay my vengeance,  
swore  
That Athens towering in her might should  
fall  
And Rome should triumph on her pros-  
trate wall.  
But oh, if haughty Greece should captive  
bring  
The great Darius, Persia's mighty King,  
What power her pride, what power her  
might shall move ?  
Not e'en the Thunderer, not eternal Jove ;

E'en to thy heaven shall rise her towering fame,  
 And prostrate nations will adore her name.  
 Rather on me thy instant vengeance take  
 Than all should fall for Cytherea's sake!  
 Oh! hurl me flaming in the burning lake,  
 Transfix me there unknown to Olympian  
   calm,  
 Launch thy red bolt, and bare thy crimson  
   arm,  
 I'd suffer all—more—bid my woes in-  
   crease,  
 To hear but one sad groan from haughty  
   Greece.  
 She thus her grief with fruitless rage  
   expressed,  
 And pride and anger swelled within her  
   breast.  
 But he whose thunders awe the troubled  
   sky  
 Thus mournful spake, and curbed the  
   rising sigh:  
 'And it is thus celestial pleasures flow?  
 E'en here shall sorrow reach and mortal  
   woe?  
 Shall strife the heavenly powers for ever  
   move,  
 And e'en insult the sacred ear of Jove?  
 Know, O rebellious, Greece shall rise  
   sublime,  
 In fame the first, nor, daughter, mine  
   the crime,  
 In valour foremost, and in virtue great:  
 Fame's highest glories shall attend her  
   state.  
 So fate ordains, nor all my boasted power  
 Can raise those virtues, or those glories  
   lower.  
 But rest secure, destroying time must  
   come,  
 And Athens' self must own imperial  
   Rome.  
 Then the great Thunderer, and with  
   visage mild,  
 Shook his ambrosial curls before his child,  
 And bending awful gave the eternal nod;  
 Heaven quaked, and fate adored the  
   parent God.  
 Joy seized the Goddess of the smiles and  
   loves,  
 Nor longer care her heavenly bosom  
   moves;

Hope rose, and o'er her soul its powers  
   displayed,  
 Nor checked by sorrow, nor by grief  
   dismayed.  
 She thus: 'O thou, whose awful thunders  
   roll  
 Thro' heaven's ethereal vaults and shake  
   the Pole,  
 Eternal Sire, so wonderfully great,  
 To whom is known the secret page of fate,  
 Say, shall great Persia, next to Rome  
   most dear  
 To Venus' breast, shall Persia learn to  
   fear?  
 Say, shall her fame and princely glories  
   cease?  
 Shall Persia, servile, own the sway of  
   Greece?'  
 To whom the Thunderer bent his brow  
   divine.  
 And thus in accents heavenly and benign:  
 'Daughter, not mine the secrets to relate,  
 The mysteries of all-revolving fate.  
 But ease thy breast; enough for thee to  
   know,  
 What powerful fate decrees will Jove  
   bestow!'  
 He then her griefs and anxious woes  
   beguiled,  
 And in his sacred arms embraced his child.  
 Doubt clouds the Goddess' breast—she  
   calls her car,  
 And lightly sweeps the liquid fields of air.  
 When sable night midst silent nature  
   springs,  
 And o'er Athena shakes her drowsy  
   wings,  
 The Paphian Goddess from Olympus flies,  
 And leaves the starry senate of the skies.  
 To Athens' heaven-blessed towers the  
   Queen repairs  
 To raise more sufferings, and to cause  
   more cares;  
 The Pylian Sage she moved, so loved  
   by fame,  
 In face, in wisdom, and in voice the same.  
 Twelve Chiefs in sleep absorbed and  
   grateful rest  
 She first beheld, and them she thus  
   address:  
 'Immortal Chiefs, the fraudulent Goddess  
   cries,  
 While all the hero kindled in her eyes,

'For you, these aged arms did I employ,  
 For you, we razed the sacred walls of  
     Troy,  
 And now for you my shivering shade is  
     driven  
 From Pluto's dreary realms by urgent  
     heaven;  
 Then oh, be wise, nor tempt th' unequal  
     fight  
 In open fields, but wait superior might  
 Within immortal Athens' sacred wall;  
 There strive, there triumph, nor there  
     fear to fall!  
 To own the Thunderer's sway, then  
     Greeks prepare.'  
 Benign she said, and melted into air.

## BOOK II

WHEN from the briny deep the orient  
     morn  
 Exalts her purple light and beams  
     unshorn,  
 And when the flaming orb of infant day  
 Glares o'er the earth and re-illumes the  
     sky,  
 The twelve deceived, with souls on fire,  
     arose,  
 While the false vision fresh in memory  
     glows.  
 The Senate first they sought, whose  
     lofty wall  
 Midst Athens rises, and o'er shadows all;  
 The pride of Greece, it lifts its front  
     sublime,  
 Unbent amidst the ravages of time.  
 High on their towering seats, the heroes  
     found  
 The Chiefs of Athens solemn ranged  
     around;  
 One of the twelve, the great Clombrotus,  
     then,  
 Renowned for piety, and loved by men:  
 'Assembled heroes, Chiefs to Pallas dear,  
 All great in battle and in virtue, hear!  
 When night with sable wings extended  
     rose  
 And wrapt our weary limbs in sweet  
     repose,  
 I and my friends, Cydoon famed in song,  
 Thelon the valiant, Heracles the strong,  
 Cleon and Thermosites, in battle great,  
 By Pallas loved and blest by partial fate,

To us and other six, while day toils steep  
 Our eyes in happy dreams and grateful  
     sleep,  
 The Pylian Sage appeared. But not as  
     when  
 On Troy's last dust he stood, the pride  
     of men;  
 Driven from the shore of Acheron he  
     came  
 From lower realms to point the path to  
     fame.  
 "O glorious Chiefs," the sacred hero said,  
 "For you and for your fame all Troy has  
     bled;  
 Hither for you my shivering shade is  
     driven  
 From Pluto's dreary realms by urgent  
     heaven;  
 Then oh, be wise, nor tempt th' unequal  
     fight  
 In open field, but wait superior might  
 Within immortal Athens' sacred wall;  
 There strive, there triumph, nor there  
     fear to fall!  
 To own the Thunderer's sway, then  
     Greeks prepare."  
 Benign he said, and melted into air.  
 "Leave us not thus," I cried, "O Pylian  
     Sage,  
 Experienced Nestor, famed for reverend  
     age;  
 Say first, great hero, shall the trump of  
     fame  
 Our glory publish, or disclose our shame?  
 Oh, what are Athens' fates?" In vain  
     I said;  
 E'en as I spoke the shadowy Chief had  
     fled.  
 Then here we flew to own the vision's  
     sway,  
 And heaven's decrees to adore and to  
     obey.'  
 He thus; and as before the blackened  
     skies  
 Sound the hoarse breezes, murmuring  
     as they rise,  
 So thro' th' assembled Greeks one mur-  
     mur rose,  
 One long dull echo lengthening as it goes.  
 Then all was hushed in silence—breath-  
     less awe  
 Opprest each tongue, and trembling they  
     adore.

But now uprising from th' astonished  
 Chiefs,  
 Divine Miltiades exposed his griefs;  
 For well the godlike warrior Sage had  
 seen  
 The frauds deceitful of the Paphian  
 Queen,  
 And feared for Greece—for Greece to  
 whom is given  
 Eternal fame, the purest gift of heaven.  
 And yet he feared. The pious hero rose,  
 Majestic in his sufferings, in his woes;  
 Grief clammed his tongue, but soon his  
 spirit woke,  
 Words burst aloft, and all the Patriot  
 spoke.  
 'O Athens, Athens! all the snares I view;  
 Thus shalt thou fall, and fall inglorious  
 too!  
 Are all thy boasted dignities no more!  
 Is all thy might, are all thy glories o'er!  
 Oh, woe on woe, unutterable grief!  
 Not Nestor's shade, that cursèd phantom  
 chief,  
 But in that reverend air, that lofty mien,  
 Behold the frauds of Love's revengeful  
 Queen.  
 Not yet her thoughts does vengeance  
 cease t' employ;  
 Her son Aeneas' wrongs, and burning  
 Troy,  
 Not yet forgotten lie within her breast,  
 Nor soothed by time, nor by despair  
 deprest.  
 Greeks still extolled by glory and by  
 fame—  
 For yet, O Chiefs! ye bear a Grecian  
 name—  
 If in these walls, these sacred walls, we  
 wait  
 The might of Persia and the will of fate,  
 Before superior force will Athens fall  
 And one o'erwhelming ruin bury all.  
 Then in the open plain your might essay,  
 Rush on to battle, crush Darius' sway;  
 The frauds of Venus, warrior Greeks,  
 beware,  
 Disdain the Persian foes, nor stoop to  
 fear.'  
 This said, Clombrotus him indignant  
 heard,  
 Nor felt his wisdom, nor his wrath he  
 feared.

With rage the Chief, the godlike Sage,  
 beheld,  
 And passion in his stubborn soul re-  
 belled.  
 'Thrice impious man,' th' infuriate  
 Chieftain cries  
 (Flames black and fearful flashing from  
 his eyes),  
 'Where lies your spirit, Greeks! and  
 can ye bow  
 To this proud upstart of your power so  
 low!  
 What! does his aspect awe ye! is his eye  
 So full of haughtiness and majesty!  
 Behold the impious soul, that dares defy  
 The power of Gods and Sovereign of  
 the sky!  
 And can your hands no sacred weapon  
 wield  
 To crush the tyrant, and your country  
 shield!  
 On, Greeks!—your sons, your homes,  
 your country free  
 From such usurping Chiefs and tyranny!'   
 He said, and grasped his weapon; at  
 his words  
 Beneath the horizon gleamed ten thou-  
 sand swords,  
 Ten thousand swords e'en in one instant  
 raised,  
 Sublime they danced aloft, and midst  
 the Senate blazed;  
 Nor wisdom checked, nor gratitude re-  
 prest,  
 They rose, and flashed before the Sage's  
 breast.  
 With pride undaunted, greatness un-  
 subdued,  
 'Gainst him in arms the impetuous Greeks  
 he viewed,  
 Unarmed, unawed, before th' infuriate  
 bands,  
 Nor begged for life, nor stretched his  
 suppliant hands.  
 He stood astounded, riveted, opprest  
 By grief unspeakable, which swelled  
 his breast;  
 Life, feeling, being, sense forgotten lie,  
 Buried in one wide waste of misery.  
 Can this be Athens! this her Senate's  
 pride!  
 He asked but gratitude,—was this de-  
 nied!

Tho' Europe's homage at his feet were  
 hurled  
 Athens forsakes him—Athens was his  
 world.  
 Unutterable woe! by anguish stung  
 All his full soul rushed heaving to his  
 tongue,  
 And thoughts of power, of fame, of  
 greatness o'er,  
 He cried 'Athenians!' and he could no  
 more.  
 Awed by that voice of agony, that word,  
 Hushed were the Greeks, and sheathed  
 the obedient sword;  
 They stood abashed—to them the ancient  
 Chief  
 Began, and thus relieved his swelling  
 grief:  
 'Athenians! warrior Greeks! my words  
 revere!  
 Strike me, but listen—bid me die, but  
 hear!  
 Hear not Clombrotus when he bids you  
 wait,  
 At Athens' walls, Darius and your fate;  
 I feel that Pallas' self my soul inspires,  
 My mind she strengthens, and my bosom  
 fires;  
 Strike, Greeks! but hear me; think not  
 to this heart  
 Yon thirsty swords one breath of fear  
 impart!  
 Such slavish, low-born thoughts, to  
 Greeks unknown,  
 A Persian feels, and cherishes alone!  
 Hear me, Athenians! hear me, and  
 believe,  
 See Greece mistaken! e'en the Gods  
 deceive.  
 But fate yet wavers—yet may wisdom  
 move  
 These threatening woes and thwart the  
 Queen of Love.  
 Obey my counsels, and invoke for aid  
 The cloud-compelling God and blue-eyed  
 maid;  
 I fear not for myself the silent tomb;  
 Death lies in every shape, and death  
 must come.  
 But ah! ye mock my truth, traduce my  
 fame,  
 Ye blast my honour, stigmatize my  
 name!

Ye call me tyrant when I wish thee free,  
 Usurper, when I live but, Greece, for  
 thee!  
 And thus the Chief—and boding silence  
 drowned  
 Each clam'rous tongue, and sullen reigned  
 around.  
 'O Chief!' great Aristides first began,  
 'Mortal yet perfect, godlike and yet man!  
 Boast of ungrateful Greece! my prayer  
 attend.  
 Oh! be my Chieftain, Guardian, Father,  
 Friend!  
 And ye, O Greeks! impetuous and  
 abhorred,  
 Again presumptuous, lift the rebelsword,  
 Again your weapons raise, in hateful  
 ire,  
 To crush the Leader, Hero, Patriot, Sire!  
 Not such was Greece when Greeks united  
 stood  
 To bathe perfidious Troy in hostile  
 blood;  
 Not such were Greeks inspired by glory;  
 then  
 As Gods they conquered, now they're  
 less than men!  
 Degenerate race! now lost to once-  
 loved fame,  
 Traitors to Greece and to the Grecian  
 name!  
 Who now your honours, who your  
 praise will seek?  
 Who now shall glory in the name of  
 Greek?  
 But since such discords your base souls  
 divide,  
 Procure the lots, let Jove and Heaven  
 decide.'  
 To him Clombrotus thus admiring cries:  
 'Thy thoughts how wondrous, and thy  
 words how wise!  
 So let it be, avert the threatened woes,  
 And Jove be present and the right dis-  
 close;  
 But give me, Sire of Gods and powers  
 above,  
 The heavenly vision, and my truth to  
 prove!  
 Give me t' avenge the breach of all thy  
 laws,  
 T' avenge myself, then aid my righteous  
 cause!

If this thou wilt, I'll to thine altars lead  
 Twelve bulls which to thy sacred name  
     shall bleed,  
 Six snow-white heifers of a race divine  
 Prostrate shall fall, and heap the groaning  
     shrine.  
 Nor this the most—six rams that fearless  
     stray  
 Untouched by man, for thee this arm  
     shall slay.'  
 Thus prayed the Chief, with shouts the  
     heavens resound;  
 Jove weighs the balance and the lots go  
     round!  
 Declare, O Muse! for to thy piercing eyes  
 The book of fate irrevocably lies;  
 What lots leapt forth, on that eventful day,  
 Who won, who lost, all-seeing Goddess,  
     say!  
 First great Clombrotus all his fortune  
     tried  
 And strove with fate, but Jove his prayer  
     denied.  
 Infuriate to the skies his arms are driven,  
 And raging thus upbraids the King of  
     Heaven:  
 'Is this the virtue of the blest abodes,  
 And this the justice of the God of Gods?  
 Can he who hurls the bolt and shakes the  
     sky  
 The prayer of truth, unblemished truth,  
     deny?  
 Has he no faith by whom the clouds are  
     riven,  
 Whose superior on the throne of heaven?  
 No wonder earth-born men are prone  
     to fall  
 In sin, or listen to dishonour's call,  
 When Gods, th' immortal Gods, trans-  
     gress the laws  
 Of truth, and sin against a righteous  
     cause.'  
 Furious he said, by anger's spirit fired,  
 Then sullen from the Senate walls retired.  
 'Tis now Miltiades' stern fate to dare,  
 But first he lifts his pious soul in prayer.  
 'Daughter of Jove!' the mighty Chief  
     began,  
 'Without thy wisdom, frail and weak  
     is man.  
 A phantom Greece adores; oh, show  
     thy power,  
 And prove thy love in this eventful hour!

Crown all thy glory, all thy might  
     declare!  
 The Chieftain prayed, and Pallas heard  
     his prayer.  
 Swayed by the presence of the power  
     divine,  
 The fated lot, Miltiades, was thine!  
 That hour the swelling trump of partial  
     fame  
 Diffused eternal glory on thy name!  
 'Daughter of Jove,' he cries, 'uncon-  
     quered maid!  
 Thy power I own, and I confess thy aid;  
 For this twelve ewes upon thy shrine  
     shall smoke  
 Of milk-white fleece, the comeliest of  
     their flock,  
 While hecatombs and generous sacrifice  
 Shall fume and blacken half th' aston-  
     ished skies.'  
 And thus the Chief—the shouting Greeks  
     admire,  
 While truth's bright spirit sets their  
     souls on fire.  
 Then thus Themistocles: 'Ye Grecian  
     host,  
 Not now the time for triumph or for  
     boast.  
 Now, Greeks! for grave toils your minds  
     prepare,  
 Not for the strife, but council of the war.  
 Behold the sacred herald! sent by  
     Greece  
 To Sparta's vales, now hushed in leagues  
     of peace;  
 Her Chiefs, to aid the common cause,  
     t' implore,  
 And bid Darius shun the Argive shore;  
 Behold him here! then let the leader  
     Greek  
 Command the bearer of our hopes to  
     speak.'  
 And thus the Sage: 'Where'er the  
     herald stands,  
 Bid him come forth, 'tis Athens' Chief  
     commands,  
 And bid him speak with freedom uncon-  
     trolled,  
 His thoughts deliver and his charge un-  
     fold.'  
 He said and sate—the Greeks impatient  
     wait  
 The will of Sparta and Athena's fate.

Silent they sate—so ere the whirlwinds  
     rise,  
 Ere billows foam and thunder to the  
     skies,  
 Nature in death-like calm her breath sus-  
     pends,  
 And hushed in silent awe th' approaching  
     storm attends.  
 Now midst the Senate's walls the herald  
     stands :  
 ' Ye Greeks,' he said, and stretched his  
     sacred hands,  
 ' Assembled heroes, ye Athenian bands,  
 And thou, beloved of Jove, our Chief,  
     O Sage,  
 Renowned for wisdom, as renowned for  
     age,  
 And all ye Chiefs in battle rank divine !  
 No joyful mission swayed by Pallas  
     mine.  
 The hardy Spartans with one voice de-  
     clare  
 Their will to aid our freedom and our  
     war ;  
 Instant they armed, by zeal and impulse  
     driven,  
 But on the plains of the mysterious heaven  
 Comets and fires were writ—an awful  
     sign,  
 And dreadful omen of the wrath divine :  
 While threatened plagues upon their  
     shores appear,  
 They curb their valour, all subdued by  
     fear ;  
 The oracles declare the will above,  
 And of the sister and the wife of Jove,  
 That not until the moon's bright course  
     was o'er  
 The Spartan warriors should desert their  
     shore.  
 Threats following threats succeed the  
     mandate dire,  
 Plagues to themselves, and to their har-  
     vest fire.  
 The Spartan Chiefs desist, their march  
     delay  
 To wait th' appointed hour and heaven  
     obey.  
 Grief smote my heart, my hopes and  
     mission vain ;  
 Their town I quitted for my native plain,  
 And when an eminence I gained, in woe  
 I gazed upon the verdant fields below,

Where Nature's ample reign, extending  
     wide,  
 Displays her graces with commanding  
     pride ;  
 Where cool Eurotas winds her limpid  
     floods  
 Thro' verdant valleys, and thro' shady  
     woods ;  
 And crowned in majesty o'ertowering  
     all,  
 In bright effulgence Sparta's lofty wall.  
 To these I looked farewell, and humbled,  
     bowed  
 In chastened sorrow to the thundering  
     God.  
 'Twas thus I mused, when from a ver-  
     dant grove  
 That wafts delicious perfume from above,  
 The monster Pan his form gigantic reared,  
 And dreadful to my awe-struck sight  
     appeared.  
 I hailed the God who reigns supreme  
     below,  
 Known by the horns that started from  
     his brow ;  
 Up to the hips a goat, but man's his face,  
 Tho' grim, and stranger to celestial grace.  
 Within his hand a shepherd's crook he  
     bore,  
 The gift of Dian on th' Arcadian shore ;  
 Before th' immortal power I, fearing,  
     bowed,  
 Congealed with dread, and thus ad-  
     dressed the God :  
 " Comes Hermes' son, as awful as his sire,  
 To vent upon the Greeks immortal ire ?  
 Is't not enough the mandate stern I bring  
 From Sparta's Chiefs and Sparta's royal  
     King,  
 That heaven enjoins them to refrain from  
     fight  
 Till Dian fills again her horns with light ?  
 Then vain their aid, ere then may  
     Athens fall  
 And Persia's haughty Chiefs invest her  
     wall."

I said and sighed, the God in accents mild  
 My sorrow thus and rigid griefs beguiled :  
 " Not to destroy I come, O chosen Greek,  
 Not Athens' fall, but Athens' fame I seek.  
 Then give again to honour and to fame  
 My power despised and my forgotten  
     name.

At Sparta's doom no longer, Chief,  
 repine,  
 But learn submission to the will divine;  
 Behold e'en now, within this fated hour,  
 On Marathonian plains, the Persian  
 power!  
 E'en Hippias' self inspires th' embattled  
 host,  
 Th' Athenian's terror, as the Persian's  
 boast.  
 Bid Athens rise and glory's powers  
 attest.  
 Enough—no more—the fates conceal the  
 rest."  
 He said, his visage burned with heavenly  
 light;  
 He spoke and, speaking, vanished from  
 my sight;  
 And awed, I sought where those loved  
 walls invite.  
 But think not, warrior Greeks, the fault  
 is mine,  
 If Athens fall—it is by wrath divine.  
 I vainly, vainly grieve, the evil springs  
 From him—the God of Gods, the King  
 of Kings!  
 The Herald said, and bent his sacred  
 head,  
 While cherished hope from every bosom  
 fled.  
 Each dauntless hero, by despair deprest,  
 Felt the deep sorrow swelling in his  
 breast:  
 They mourn for Athens, friendless and  
 alone;  
 Cries followed cries, and groan succeeded  
 groan.  
 Th' Athenian matrons, startled at the  
 sound,  
 Rush from their looms and anxious  
 crowd around.  
 They ask the cause, the fatal cause is  
 known  
 By each fond sigh and each renewing  
 groan,  
 While in their arms some infant love  
 they bear  
 At once for which they joy, for which  
 they fear.  
 Hushed on its mother's breast, the  
 cherished child,  
 Unconscious midst the scene of terror,  
 smiled.

On rush the matrons, they despairing  
 seek  
 Miltiades, adored by every Greek;  
 Him found at length, his counsels they  
 entreat,  
 Hang on his knees and clasp his sacred  
 feet;  
 Their babes before him on the ground  
 they throw  
 In all the maddening listlessness of woe.  
 First Delopeia, of the matrons chief,  
 Thus vents her bursting soul in frantic  
 grief,  
 While her fond babe she holds aloft in  
 air;  
 Thus her roused breast prefers a mother's  
 prayer:  
 'O Son of Cimon, for the Grecians raise  
 To heaven thy fame, thy honour, and  
 thy praise.  
 Thus—thus—shall Athens and her heroes  
 fall,  
 Shall thus one ruin seize and bury all?  
 Say, shall these babes be strangers then  
 to fame,  
 And be but Greeks in spirit and in name?  
 Oh, first, ye Gods! and hear a mother's  
 prayer,  
 First let them glorious fall in ranks of  
 war!  
 If Asia triumph, then shall Hippias reign,  
 And Athens' free-born sons be slaves  
 again!  
 O Son of Cimon! let thy influence call  
 The souls of Greeks to triumph or to  
 fall!  
 And guard their own, their children's,  
 country's name,  
 From foul dishonour and eternal shame!  
 Thus thro' her griefs the love of glory  
 broke;  
 The mother wept, but 'twas the Patriot  
 spoke:  
 And as before the Greek she bowed with  
 grace,  
 The lucid drops bedewed her lovely face.  
 Their shrieks and frantic cries the  
 matrons cease,  
 And death-like silence awes the sons of  
 Greece.  
 Thrice did the mighty Chief of Athens  
 seek  
 To curb his feelings and essay to speak;

'Twas vain—the ruthless sorrow wrung  
 his breast,  
 His mind disheartened and his soul oppressed.  
 He thus—while o'er his cheek the  
 moisture stole :  
 'Retire, ye matrons, nor unman my soul !  
 Tho' little strength this aged arm retains,  
 My swelling soul Athena's foe disdains ;  
 Hushed be your griefs, to heaven for  
 victory cry,  
 Assured we'll triumph or with freedom  
 die.  
 And ye, O Chiefs, when night disowns  
 her sway,  
 And pensive Dian yields her power to  
 day,  
 To quit these towers for Marathon prepare,  
 And brave Darius in the ranks of war.  
 For yet may Jove protect the Grecian  
 name  
 And crown, in unborn ages, Athens'  
 fame.'  
 He said—and glowing with the warlike  
 fire,  
 And cheered by hope, the godlike Chiefs  
 retire.  
 Now Cynthia rules the earth, the flaming  
 God  
 In ocean sinks, green Neptune's old  
 abode ;  
 Black Erebus on drowsy pinions springs,  
 And o'er Athena cowers his sable wings.

## BOOK III

WHEN from the deep the hour's eternal  
 sway  
 Impels the coursers of the flaming day,  
 The long-haired Greeks with brazen  
 arms prepare  
 Their freedom to preserve and wage the  
 war.  
 First Aristides from the couch arose,  
 While his great mind with all Minerva  
 glows ;  
 His mighty limbs his golden arms invest,  
 The cuirass blazes on his ample breast,  
 The glittering cuisses both his legs enfold,  
 And the huge shield's on fire with  
 burnished gold ;

His hands two spears uphold of equal  
 size,  
 And fame's bright glories kindle in his  
 eyes ;  
 Upon his helmet plumes of horse-hair  
 nod,  
 And forth he moved, majestic as a God !  
 Upon his snorting steed the warrior  
 sprung,  
 The courser neighed, the brazen armour  
 rung ;  
 From heaven's ethereal heights the  
 martial maid  
 With conscious pride the hero's might  
 surveyed.  
 Him as she eyed, she shook the gorgon  
 shield ;  
 'Henceforth to me,' she cried, 'let all  
 th' immortals yield.  
 Let monster Mars the Latian regions  
 own,  
 For Attica, Minerva stands alone.'  
 And now th' unconquered Chief of  
 Justice gains  
 The Senate's walls, and there the steed  
 detains,  
 Whence he dismounts—Miltiades he  
 seeks,  
 Beloved of Jove, the leader of the Greeks ;  
 Nor sought in vain ; there clad in  
 armour bright  
 The Chieftain stood, all eager for the  
 fight.  
 Within his aged hands two lances shine,  
 The helmet blazed upon his brows divine ;  
 And as he bends beneath th' unequal  
 weight  
 Youth smiles again, when with gigantic  
 might  
 His nervous limbs immortal arms could  
 wield,  
 Crush foe on foe, and raging, heap the  
 field.  
 Yet tho' such days were past, and ruthless  
 age  
 Transformed the warrior to the thoughtful  
 sage ;  
 Tho' the remorseless hand of silent time  
 Impaired each joint and stiffened every  
 limb ;  
 Yet thro' his breast the fire celestial stole,  
 Throbb'd in his veins, and kindled in his  
 soul.

In thought, the Lord of Asia threatens no more,  
 And Hippias bites the dust mid seas of gore.  
 Him as he viewed, the youthful hero's breast  
 Heaved high with joy, and thus the Sage addressed :  
 ' Chief, best beloved of Pallas,' he began,  
 ' In fame allied to Gods, O wondrous man !  
 Behold Apollo gilds th' Athenian wall,  
 Our freedom waits, and fame and glory call  
 To battle ! Asia's King and myriads dare,  
 Swell the loud tramp, and swell the din of war.'  
 He said impatient ; then the warriors sage  
 Began, regardless of the fears of age :  
 ' Not mine, O youth, with caution to control  
 The fire and glory of thy eager soul ;  
 So was I wont in brazen arms to shine,  
 Such strength and such impatient fire were mine.'  
 He said, and bade the trumpet's peals rebound,  
 High, and more high, the echoing war-notes sound :  
 Sudden one general shout the din replies,  
 A thousand lances blazing as they rise,  
 And Athens' banners wave and float along the skies.  
 So from the marsh the cranes embodied fly,  
 Clap their glad wings and cut the liquid sky ;  
 With thrilling cries they mount their joyful way,  
 Vig'rous they spring, and hail the new-born day.  
 So rose the shouting Greeks, inspired by fame  
 T' assert their freedom and maintain their name.  
 First came Themistocles, in arms renowned,  
 Whose steed, impatient, tore the trembling ground ;  
 High o'er his helmet snowy plumes arise,  
 And shade that brow which Persia's might defies ;

A purple mantle graceful waves behind,  
 Nor hides his arms, but floats upon the wind ;  
 His mighty form two crimson belts enfold,  
 Rich in embroidery and stiff with gold.  
 Callimachus the Polemarch next came,  
 The theme of general praise and general fame.  
 Cynaegirus, who e'en the Gods would dare,  
 Heap ranks on ranks, and thunder thro' the war ;  
 His virtues godlike ; man's his strength surpassed,  
 In battle foremost, and in flight the last ;  
 His ponderous helm's a shaggy lion's hide,  
 And the huge war-axe clattered at his side ;  
 The mighty Chief a brazen chariot bore,  
 While fame and glory hail him and adore.  
 Antenor next his aid to Athens gave,  
 Like Paris youthful, and like Hector brave ;  
 Cleon, Minerva's priest, experienced sage,  
 Advanced in wisdom, as advanced in age.  
 Agregoras, Delenus' favourite child ;  
 The parent's cares the glorious son beguiled ;  
 But now he leaves his sire to seek his doom,  
 His country's freedom or a noble tomb.  
 And young Aratus, moved with youthful pride,  
 And heart elated at the hero's side.  
 Next thou, Cleones, thou triumphant moved,  
 By Athens honoured, by the Greeks beloved :  
 And Sthenelus the echoing pavements trod,  
 From youth devoted to the martial God.  
 Honour unspotted crowned the hero's name,  
 Unbounded virtue and unbounded fame.  
 Such heroes shone the foremost of the host,  
 All Athens' glory and all Athens' boast.  
 Behind, a sable cloud of warriors rise  
 With ponderous arms, and shouting rend the skies :  
 These bands with joy Miltiades inspire,  
 Fame fills his breast and sets his soul on fire ;

<p>             Aloft he springs into the gold-wrought                car,              While the shrill blast resounds, to war!                to war!              The coursers plunge as conscious of                their load              And, proudly neighing, feel they bear                a God.              The snow-white steeds by Pallas' self                were given,              Which sprung from the immortal breed                of heaven.              The car was wrought of brass and burn-                ished gold,              And divers figures on its bulk were told,              Of heroes who in plunging to the fight              Shrouded Troy's glories in eternal night:              Of fierce Pelides, who relenting gave,              At Priam's prayer, to Hector's corpse a                grave:              Here Spartan Helen flies her natives shore              To bid proud Troy majestic stand no                more:              There Hector clasps his consort to his                breast,              Consols her sufferings, tho' himself op-                prest;              And there he rushes to the embattled                field              For victory or death, nor e'en in death                to yield:              Here Ilium prostrate feels the Argive ire,              Her heroes perished, and her towers on                fire:              And here old Priam breathes his last-                drawn sigh,              And feels 'tis least of all his griefs to                die:              There his loved sire, divine Aeneas,                bears,              And leaves his own with all a patriot's                tears;              While in one hand he holds his weeping                boy,              And looks his last on lost unhappy Troy.              The warrior seized the reins, the im-                patient steeds              Foam at the mouth and spring where                glory leads.              The gates the heroes pass, th' Athenian                dames              Bend from their towers, and bid them                save from flames           </p>	<p>             Their walls, their infant heirs, and fill                the skies              With shouts, entreaties, prayers, and                plaintive cries:              Echo repeats their words, the sounds                impart              New vigour to each Greek's aspiring                heart.              Forward with shouts they press, and                hastening on              Try the bold lance and dream of Mara-                thon.              Meanwhile the Persians on th' embattled                plain              Prepare for combat, and the Greeks dis-                dain.              Twice twenty sable bulls they daily pay,              Unequalled homage, to the God of day;              Such worthy gifts the wealthy warriors                bring,              And such the offerings of the Persian                King;              While the red wine around his altars                flowed              They beg protection from the flaming                God.              But the bright Patron of the Trojan war              Accepts their offerings, but rejects their                prayer:              The power of love alone dares rigid fate,              To vent on Greece her vengeance and                her hate;              Not love for Persia prompts the venge-                ful dame,              But hate for Athens, and the Grecian                name:              In Phoebus' name the fraudulent Queen                receives              The hecatombs, and happy omens gives.              And now the heralds with one voice                repeat              The will of Datis echoing thro' the fleet,              To council, to convene the Persian train,              That Athens' Chiefs should brave their                might in vain.              The Chiefs and Hippas' self his will obey,              And seek the camp—the heralds lead the                way.              There on the couch their leader Datis sate              In ease luxurious, and in kingly state;              Around his brow pride deep and scornful                played,              A purple robe his slothful limbs arrayed,           </p>
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Which o'er his form its silken draperies  
 fold,  
 Majestic sweeps the ground, and glows  
 with gold;  
 While Artaphernes resting at his side  
 Surveys th' advancing train with conscious pride.  
 The elder leader, mighty Datis, then :  
 ' Assembled Princes, great and valiant men,  
 And thou thrice glorious Hippas, loved  
 by heaven,  
 To whom, as to thy sire, is Athens  
 given ;  
 Behold the Grecian banners float afar,  
 Shouting they hail us, and provoke the war.  
 Then, mighty Chiefs and Princes, be it  
 yours  
 To warm and fire the bosoms of our  
 powers,  
 That when the morn has spread her  
 saffron light  
 The Greeks may own and dread Darius'  
 might ;  
 For know, O Chiefs, when once proud  
 Athens falls,  
 When Persian flames shall reach her  
 haughty walls,  
 From her depression wealth to you shall  
 spring,  
 And honour, fame, and glory to your  
 King.  
 He said ; his words the Princes' breasts  
 inspire :  
 Silent they bend, and with respect retire.  
 And now the Greeks in able marches  
 gain,  
 By Pallas fired, the Marathonian plain.  
 Before their eyes th' unbounded ocean  
 rolls  
 And all Darius' fleet—unawed their  
 souls :  
 They fix their banners and the tents they  
 raise,  
 And in the sun their polished javelins  
 blaze.  
 Their leader's self within the brazen car  
 Their motions orders, and prepares for  
 war ;  
 Their labours o'er, the aged hero calls  
 The Chiefs to council midst the canvas  
 walls.

And then the Sage : ' How great the  
 Persian host !  
 But let them not their strength or numbers boast ;  
 Their slothful minds, to love of fame unknown,  
 Sigh not for war, but for the spoil alone.  
 Strangers to honour's pure immortal  
 light,  
 They not as heroes, but as women fight ;  
 Grovelling as proud, and cowardly as  
 vain,  
 The Greeks they fear, their numbers  
 they disdain.  
 And now, Athenians ! fired by glory, rise  
 And lift your fame unsullied to the skies,  
 Your victim Persia, liberty your prize.  
 And now twice twenty sable bullocks  
 bring  
 To heap the altars of the thundering King,  
 Bid twelve white heifers of gigantic  
 breed  
 To Jove's great daughter, wise Minerva,  
 bleed,  
 And then in sleep employ the solemn  
 night,  
 Nor till Apollo reigns provoke the fight.'  
 The hero said ; the warlike council o'er  
 They raise the lofty altars on the shore.  
 They pile in heaps the pride of all the  
 wood ;  
 They fall the first, who first in beauty  
 stood :  
 The pine that soars to heaven, the sturdy  
 oak,  
 And cedars crackle at each hero's stroke.  
 And now two altars stand of equal size,  
 And lift their forms majestic to the  
 skies ;  
 The heroes then twice twenty bullocks  
 bring,  
 A worthy offering to the thundering King.  
 The aged leader seized the sacred knife,  
 Blow followed blow, out gushed the  
 quivering life ;  
 Thro' their black hides the ruthless steel  
 is driven,  
 The victims groan—Jove thunders from  
 his heaven.  
 And then their bulks upon the pile they  
 lay,  
 The flames rush upward, and the armies  
 pray.

Driven by the wind, the roaring fires ascend,	'Ye sons of Athens, loved by heaven,' she cries,
And now they hiss in air, and now descend ;	'Revered by men, be valiant and be wise.
With all their sap, the new-cut faggots raise	When morn awakes, Darius' numbers dare,
Their flames to heaven, and crackle as they blaze.	Clang your loud arms, and rouse the swelling war :
And then the Sage : 'Oh, thou of powers above	But first to yon proud fleet a herald send To bid the Persians yield, and fight sus- pend ;
The first and mightiest, hear, eternal Jove !	For vainly to their God they suppliant call,
Give us, that Athens in her strength may rise,	Jove favours Greece, and Pallas wills their fall.'
And lift our fame and freedom to the skies !'	She said, and thro' the depths of air she flies,
This said, he ceased—th' assembled warriors pour	Mounts the blue heaven, and scales the liquid skies.
The sacred incense, and the God adore ; Then partial Jove propitious heard their prayer,	The Greeks rejoicing thank the powers above,
Thrice shook the heavens, and thundered thro' the air.	And Jove's great daughter, and eternal Jove ;
With joy the Greeks the favouring sign inspires,	And now a herald to the fleet they send To bid the Persians yield, and war sus- pend.
And their breasts glow with all the war- like fires ;	Thro' the divided troops the herald goes, Thro' Athens' host, and thro' th' un- numbered foes ;
And now twelve heifers white as snow they lead	Before the holy man the Persian bands Reverend give way, and ask what Greece demands :
To great Minerva's sacred name to bleed ; They fall—their bulks upon the pile are laid,	He tells not all, but that he, chosen, seeks
Sprinkled with oil, and quick in flame arrayed.	Datis their Chief, by order of the Greeks.
And now descending midst the darken- ing skies	The mission but in part he sage reveals, And what his prudence prompts him he conceals.
Behold the Goddess of the radiant eyes ; The ground she touched, beneath the mighty load	Then to their Chief they lead him, where he sate
Earth groaning rocks, and nature hails the God.	With pomp surrounded, and in gorgeous state ;
Within her hand her father's lightnings shone,	Around his kingly couch his arms were spread
And shield that blazes near th' eternal throne ;	Flaming in gold, by forge Cyclopean made.
The Greeks with fear her dauntless form surveyed,	And then stern Datis, frowning, thus began :
And trembling bowed before the blue- eyed maid.	'What hopes deceive thee, miserable man ?
Then favouring, thus began the power divine,	What treacherous fate allures thee thus to stray
While in her eyes celestial glories shine :	Thro' all our hosts ! What Gods beguile the way ?

Think'st thou to 'scape the Persian steel,  
when Greece

Our herald crushed, and banished hopes  
of peace?

But speak, what will the Greeks? and  
do they dare

To prove our might, and tempt th' un-  
equal war?

Or do they deign to own Darius' sway,  
And yield to Persia's might th' em-  
battled day!

To whom th' Athenian herald made reply:  
'The Greeks disdain your terms, and  
scorn to fly.

Unknown to heroes and to sons of Greece  
The shameful slavery of a Persian peace;  
Defiance stern, not servile gifts I bring,  
Your bonds detested, and despised your  
King.

Of equal size, the Greeks two altars raise  
To Jove's, high glory, and Minerva's  
praise;

The God propitious heard, and from the  
skies

Descends the Goddess of the azure eyes,  
And thus began—"Assembled Greeks,  
give ear,

Attend my wisdom, nor my glory fear;  
When morn awakes, Darius' numbers  
dare,

Clang your loud arms, and rouse the  
swelling war:

But first to yon proud fleet a herald send  
To bid the Persians yield, and war sus-  
pend;

For vainly to their God they suppliant call,  
Jove favours Greece, and Pallas wills  
their fall."

The Goddess spoke; th' Athenians own  
her sway;

I seek the fleet, and heaven's command  
obey.

The Greeks disdain your millions in the  
war,

Nor I, O Chief, your promised vengeance  
fear.

Strike! but remember that the God on  
high

Who rules the heavens, and thunders  
thro' the sky,

Not unrevenged will see his herald slain,  
Nor shall thy threats his anger tempt in  
vain.

And thus the Greek: then Datis thus  
replies,

Flames black and fearful scowling from  
his eyes:

'Herald, away! and Asia's vengeance  
fear;

Back to your frenzied train my mandate  
bear,

That Greece and Grecian Gods may threat  
in vain—

We scorn their anger, and their wrath  
disdain:

For he who lights the earth and rules the  
skies

With happy omens to our vows replies;  
When morn uprising breathes her saffron  
light,

Prepare to dare our millions in the fight.  
Thy life I give, Darius' will to say,  
And Asia's hate—hence, Chief, no more,  
away!

He said, and anger filled the Grecian's  
breast,

But prudent, he the rising wrath sup-  
pressed;

Indignant, thro' the canvas tents he strode  
And silently invoked the thundering God.  
Fears for his country in his bosom rose  
As on he wandered midst unnumbered  
foes;

He strikes his swelling breast and hastens  
on

O'er the wide plains of barren Marathon.  
And now he sees the Grecian banners rise,  
And well-armed warriors blaze before  
his eyes.

Then thus he spoke: 'Ye Grecian bands,  
give ear,

Ye warrior Chiefs and Attic heroes hear!  
Your will to Asia's other Prince I told,  
All which you bade me, Chieftains, to  
unfold;

But Pallas' vengeance I denounced in  
vain,

Your threats he scorned, and heard with  
proud disdain.

The God, he boasts, who lights the earth  
and skies,

With happy omens to his vows replies;  
Then when the uprising morn extends  
her light

Prepare, ye Greeks, to dare his powers  
in fight.'

He said—the Greeks for instant strife  
 declare  
 Their will, and arm impatient for the war.  
 Then he, their godlike Chief, as Pallas  
 sage :  
 ‘Obey my counsels, and repress your  
 rage,  
 Ye Greeks,’ he cried, ‘ the sacred night  
 displays  
 Her shadowy veil, and earth in gloom  
 arrays ;  
 Her sable shades e’en Persia’s Chiefs  
 obey,  
 And wait the golden mandate of the day :  
 Such is the will of Jove, and Gods above,  
 And such the order of the loved of Jove.’  
 He said—the Greeks their leader’s word  
 obey,  
 They seek their tents, and wait th’ ap-  
 proaching day ;  
 O’er either host celestial Somnus reigns,  
 And solemn silence lulls th’ embattled  
 plains.

## BOOK IV

And now the morn by Jove to mortals  
 given  
 With rosy fingers opes the gates of  
 heaven.  
 The Persian Princes and their haughty  
 Lord  
 Gird on their arms, and seize the flaming  
 sword :  
 Forth, forth they rush to tempt the battle’s  
 roar,  
 Earth groans, and shouts rebelling  
 shake the shore.  
 As when the storm the heavenly azure  
 shrouds  
 With sable night, and heaps on clouds  
 the clouds,  
 The Persians rose, and crowd th’ em-  
 battled plain,  
 And stretch their warlike millions to the  
 main ;  
 And now th’ Athenians throng the fatal  
 field,  
 By fame inspired, and swords and buck-  
 lers wield ;  
 In air sublime their floating banners rise,  
 The lances blaze, the trumpets rend the  
 skies.

And then Miltiades : ‘ Athenians, hear,  
 Behold the Persians on the field appear,  
 Dreadful in arms ; remember, Greeks,  
 your fame,  
 Rush to the war, and vindicate your  
 name ;  
 Forward ! till low in death the Persians lie,  
 For freedom triumph or for freedom die.’  
 He said ; his visage glows with heavenly  
 light ;  
 He spoke sublime, and rushed into the  
 fight.  
 And now the fury of the day began—  
 Lance combats lance, and man’s opposed  
 to man ;  
 Beneath their footsteps groans the labour-  
 ing plain,  
 And shouts re-echoing bellow to the  
 main ;  
 Mars rages fierce ; by heroes, heroes die ;  
 Earth rocks, Jove thunders, and the  
 wounded cry.  
 What mighty Chiefs by Aristides fell,  
 What heroes perished, heavenly God-  
 dess, tell :  
 First thou, O Peleus ! felt his conquering  
 hand,  
 Stretched in the dust and weltering in  
 the sand ;  
 Thro’ thy bright shield the forceful  
 weapon went,  
 Thyself in arms o’erthrown, thy corselet  
 rent.  
 Next rash Antennes met an early fate,  
 And feared, alas ! th’ unequal foe too late ;  
 And Delucus the sage, and Philo fell,  
 And Croton sought the dreary gates of  
 hell,  
 And Mnemon’s self with wealth and  
 honour crowned,  
 Revered for virtue, and for fame re-  
 nowned ;  
 He, great in battle, feared the hero’s hand,  
 Groaning he fell, and spurned the reeking  
 sand.  
 But what bold chief thus rashly dares  
 advance ?  
 Tho’ not in youth, he shakes the dreadful  
 lance ;  
 Proudly the earth the haughty warrior  
 trod,  
 He looked a Monarch and he moved a  
 God :

Then on the Greek with rage intrepid  
 flew  
 And with one blow th' unwary Greek  
 o'erthrew;  
 That hour, O Chief, and that eventful  
 day,  
 Had bade thee pass a shivering ghost  
 away,  
 But Pallas, fearful for her fav'rite's life,  
 Sudden upraised thee to renew the  
 strife;  
 Then Aristides with fresh vigour rose,  
 Shame fired his breast, his soul with  
 anger glows;  
 With all his force he rushes on the foe,  
 The warrior bending disappoints the  
 blow,  
 And thus with rage contemptuous:  
 'Chieftain, know,  
 Hippias, the loved of heaven, thine eyes  
 behold,  
 Renowned for strength of arm, in battle  
 bold,  
 But tell thy race, and who the man  
 whose might  
 Dares cope with rebel Athens' King in  
 fight.'  
 Stung to the soul, 'O slave,' the Greek  
 returns,  
 While his big heart within his bosom  
 burns,  
 'Perfidious Prince, to faith and truth  
 unknown;  
 On Athens' ashes raise thy tyrant throne,  
 When Grecia's chiefs and Grecia's heroes  
 fall,  
 When Persia's fires invest her lofty wall,  
 When nought but slaves within her  
 towers remain;  
 Then, nor till then, shalt thou, O Hippias,  
 reign,  
 Then, nor till then, will Athens yield her  
 fame  
 To foul dishonour and eternal shame!  
 Come on! no matter what my race or  
 name;  
 For this, O Prince, this truth unerring  
 know,  
 That in a Greek you meet a noble foe.'  
 Furious he said, and on the Prince he  
 sprung  
 With all his force, the meeting armour  
 rung,

Struggling they raged, and both together  
 fell.  
 That hour the tyrant's ghost had entered  
 hell,  
 But partial fate prolonged the Prince's  
 breath,  
 Renewed the combat, and forbade the  
 death.  
 Meanwhile the hosts the present war  
 suspend,  
 Silent they stand, and heaven's decree  
 attend.  
 First the bright lance majestic Hippias  
 threw,  
 But erringly the missile weapon flew;  
 Then Aristides hurled the thirsty dart,  
 Struck the round shield, and nearly  
 pierced his heart,  
 But the bright arms, that shone with  
 conscious pride,  
 Received the blow, and turned the point  
 aside.  
 And thus the Greek: 'Whom your inquir-  
 ing eyes  
 Behold, O Prince,' th' Athenian hero  
 cries,  
 'Is Aristides, called the just, a name  
 By Athens honoured, nor unknown to  
 fame.'  
 Scared at the sound, and seized by sudden  
 fright,  
 The Prince starts back in mean, inglorious  
 flight.  
 And now Bellona rages o'er the field,  
 All strive elated, all disdain to yield;  
 And great Themistocles, in arms re-  
 nowned,  
 Stretched heaps of heroes on the groan-  
 ing ground.  
 First by his hand fell Delos' self, divine,  
 The last-loved offspring of a noble line;  
 Straight thro' his neck the reeking dart  
 was driven,  
 Prostrate he sinks, and vainly calls to  
 heaven.  
 Next godlike Phanes, midst the Persians  
 just,  
 Leucon and mighty Caudos bit the  
 dust;  
 And now the Greek, with pride im-  
 prudent, dares  
 Victorious Mandrocles, renowned in  
 wars.

The agile Persian swift avoids the blow,  
Furious disarms and grasps th' unequal  
foe!

Th' intrepid Greek with godlike calm  
awaits

His instant fall, and dares th' impending  
fates;

But great Cynaegirus his danger spies  
And lashed his steeds—the ponderous  
chariot flies,

Then from its brazen bulk he leaps to  
ground,

Beneath his clanging arms the plains re-  
sound,

And on the Persian rushes fierce, and  
raised

The clattering axe on high, which threat-  
ening blazed,

And lopped his head; out spouts the  
smoking gore,

And the huge trunk rolled bleeding on  
the shore.

And then Cynaegirus: 'Thus, Persian, go  
And boast thy victory in the shades  
below,

A headless form, and tell who bade thee  
bleed,

For know a Greek performed the won-  
drous deed:

But thou, Themistocles, O hero! say  
Who bade thee rush, to tempt th' unequal  
fray?

But learn from this thy daring to restrain,  
And seek less mighty foes upon the plain.'

With secret wrath the youthful hero  
burned,

And thus impetuous to the Chief returned:  
'Such thoughts as these, unworthy those  
who dare

The battle's rage, and tempt the toils of  
war;

Heedless of death, and by no fears  
opprest,

Conquest my aim, I leave to heaven the  
rest.'

He said, and glowed with an immortal  
light,

Plunged 'midst the foes, and mingled in  
the fight.

Zeno, the bravest of the Persian youth,  
Renowned for filial piety and truth,

His mother's only joy; she loved to trace  
His father's features in his youthful face:

That sire, in fight o'erwhelmed mid seas  
of gore,

Slept unentombed, and cared for fame no  
more.

And now as youth in opening manhood  
glows,

All his loved father in his visage rose;  
Like him, regardful of his future fame,

Resolved like him to immortalize his  
name,

At glory's call he quits his native shore  
And feeble parent, to return no more.

Oh! what prophetic griefs her bosom  
wrung

When on his neck in agony she hung!  
When on that breast she hid her sorrow-  
ing face,

And feared to take, or shun, the last  
embrace!

Unhappy youth! the fates decree thy  
doom,

Those flowers, prepared for joy, shall  
deck thy tomb;

Thy mother now no more shall hail thy  
name,

So high enrolled upon the lists of fame.  
Nor check the widow's tear, the widow's  
sigh,

For e'en her son, her Zeno's doom to die;  
Zeno, e'en thou! for so the Gods decree,

A parents' threshold opes no more for  
thee!

On him the hero turned his eye severe,  
Nor on his visage saw one mark of fear;

There manly grace improved each separ-  
ate part,

And joined by ties of truth the face and  
heart.

The supple javelin then the Grecian tries  
With might gigantic, and the youth  
defies.

Its point impetuous at his breast he flung,  
The brazen shield received, and mocking  
rung;

Then Zeno seized the lance, the Chief  
defied,

And scoffing, thus began, in youthful  
pride:

'Go, mighty Greek! to weaker warriors  
go,

And fear this arm, and an unequal foe;  
A mother gave the mighty arms I bear,

Nor think with such a gift I cherish fear.'

He hurled the lance, but Pallas' self was  
 there  
 And turned the point : it passed in empty  
 air.  
 With hope renewed, again the hero tries  
 His boasted might ; the thirsty weapon  
 flies ;  
 In Zeno's breast it sinks, and drank the  
 gore,  
 And stretched the hero vanquished on  
 the shore ;  
 Gasping for utterance, and life and breath,  
 For fame he sighs, nor fears approaching  
 death.  
 Themistocles perceived, and bending low  
 Thought of his friends, and tears began  
 to flow  
 That washed the bleeding bosom of his  
 foe.  
 Young Zeno then the Grecian hero eyed,  
 Rejects his offered aid, and all defied,  
 Breathed one disdainful sigh, and turned  
 his head and died.  
 Such Persians did the godlike warrior  
 slay,  
 And bade their groaning spirits pass  
 away.  
 Epizelus, the valiant and the strong,  
 Thundered in fight, and carried death  
 along ;  
 Him not a Greek in strength of arms  
 surpassed,  
 In battle foremost, but in virtue last.  
 He, impious man, to combat dared defy  
 The Gods themselves, and senate of the  
 sky,  
 E'en earth and heaven, and heaven's  
 eternal sire,  
 He mocks his thunders and disdains his  
 ire.  
 But now the retributive hour is come,  
 And rigid justice seals the boaster's  
 doom :  
 Theseus he sees within the fight, revealed  
 To him alone—to all the rest concealed.  
 To punish guilt, he leaves the shades  
 below  
 And quits the seat of never-ending woe :  
 Pale as in death, upon his hands he bore  
 Th' infernal serpent of the dreadful shore,  
 To stay his progress should he strive to  
 fly  
 From Tart'rus far, and gain the uppersky.

This (dreadful sight!) with slippery  
 sinews now  
 Wreathed round his form, and clasped  
 his ghastly brow ;  
 With horror struck and seized with sudden  
 awe  
 The Greek beheld, nor mingled in the  
 war.  
 Withheld from combat by the force of fear,  
 He trembling thus : ' Oh say, what God  
 draws near !  
 But speak thy will, if 'tis a God, oh  
 speak !  
 Nor vent thy vengeance on a single  
 Greek.'  
 Vainly he suppliant said o'erpowered  
 with fright,  
 And instant from his eyeballs fled the  
 sight ;  
 Confused, distracted, to the skies he  
 throws  
 His frantic arms, and thus bewails his  
 woes :  
 ' Almighty ! thou by whom the bolts are  
 driven !'  
 He said, and cast his sightless balls to  
 heaven,  
 ' Restore my sight, unhappy me, restore  
 My own loved offspring, to behold once  
 more !  
 So will I honour thy divine abodes,  
 And learn how dreadful th' avenging  
 Gods !  
 And if—but oh, forbid !—you mock my  
 prayer  
 And cruel fate me ever cursed declare,  
 Give me, to yield to fame alone my life,  
 And fall immortalized in glorious strife !'  
 He said—the God who thunders thro' the  
 air  
 Frowns on his sufferings and rejects his  
 prayer ;  
 Around his form the dreadful Aegis  
 spread,  
 And darts fall harmless on his wretched  
 head ;  
 Condemned by fate in ceaseless pain to  
 groan,  
 Friendless in grief, in agony alone.  
 Now Mars and death pervade on every  
 side,  
 And heroes fall and swell the crimson  
 tide.

Not with less force th' Athenian leader  
 shone,  
 In strife conspicuous, nor to fame un-  
 known,  
 Advanced in wisdom and in honoured  
 years;  
 He nor for life, but for the battle fears.  
 Borneswift as winds within the flying car,  
 Now here, now there, directs the swell-  
 ing war,  
 On every side the foaming coursers  
 guides,  
 Here praises valour, and there rashness  
 chides;  
 While from his lips persuasive accents  
 flow  
 T' inspire th' Athenians, or unman the  
 foe.  
 The glorious Greeks rush on with daring  
 might,  
 And shout and thunder, and increase the  
 fight.  
 Nor yet inglorious do the Persians shine,  
 In battle's ranks they strength and valour  
 join:  
 Datis himself impels the ponderous car  
 Thro' broken ranks, conspicuous in the  
 war,  
 In armour sheathed, and terror round  
 him spread,  
 He whirls his chariot over heaps of dead;  
 Where'er he dreadful rushes, warriors  
 fly,  
 Ghosts seek their hell, and chiefs and  
 heroes die.  
 All pale with rage he ranks on ranks  
 o'erthrows,  
 For blood he gasps, and thunders midst  
 his foes:  
 Callimachus, the mighty leader, found  
 in fight conspicuous, bearing death  
 around:  
 The lance, wheeled instant from the  
 Persian's hand,  
 Transfixed the glorious Grecian in the  
 sand;  
 Fate ends the hero's life, and stays his  
 breath,  
 And clouds his eyeballs with the shade  
 of death:  
 Erect in air the cruel javelin stood,  
 Pierced thro' his breast, and drank the  
 spouting blood.

Released from life's impending woes and  
 care,  
 The soul immerses in the fields of air:  
 Then, crowned with laurels, seeks the  
 blest abodes  
 Of awful Pluto and the Stygian floods.  
 And now with joy great Aristides saw  
 Again proud Hippias thundering thro'  
 the war,  
 And mocking thus, 'O tyrant, now await  
 The destined blow, behold thy promised  
 fate!  
 Thrice mighty King, obey my javelin's  
 call,  
 For e'en thy godlike self's decreed to  
 fall!  
 He said, and hurled the glittering spear  
 on high,  
 The destined weapon hissed along the  
 sky;  
 Winged by the hero's all-destroying hand  
 It pierced the Prince, and stretched him  
 on the sand.  
 Then thro' the air the awful peals were  
 driven,  
 And lightnings blazed along the vast of  
 heaven;  
 The Persian hosts behold their bulwark  
 die,  
 Fear chills their hearts, and all their  
 numbers fly,  
 And reached the fleet; the shouting  
 Greeks pursue  
 All Asia's millions, flying in their view.  
 On, on, they glorious rush, and side by  
 side,  
 Yet red with gore, they plunge into the  
 tide;  
 For injured freedom's sake th' indignant  
 main  
 With swelling pride receives the crimson  
 stain;  
 The Persians spread the sail, nor dare  
 delay,  
 And suppliant call upon the King of day,  
 But vainly to their Gods the cowards  
 pray.  
 Some of the ships th' Athenian warriors  
 stay  
 And fire their bulks; the flames destroy-  
 ing rise,  
 Rushing they swell, and mount into the  
 skies.

Foremost Cynaegirus, with might divine, While midst the waves his arms majestic shine ; With blood-stained hand a Persian ship he seized, The vessel vainly strove to be released ; With fear the crew the godlike man beheld, And pride and shame their troubled bosoms swelled. They lop his limb ; then Pallas fires his frame With scorn of death, and hope of future fame : Then with the hand remaining seized the prize, A glorious spirit kindling in his eyes. Again the Persians wield the unmanly blow And wreak their vengeance on a single foe ;	The fainting Greek, by loss of blood oppress, Still feels the patriot rise within his breast ; Within his teeth the shattered ship he held, Nor in his soul one wish for life rebelled. But strength decaying, fate suppress his breath, And o'er his brows expand the dews of death ; The Elysium plains his generous spirit trod, 'He lived a Hero and he died a God.' By vengeance fired, the Grecians from the deep With rage and shouting scale the lofty ship, Then in the briny bosom of the main They hurl in heaps the living and the slain ; Thro' the wide shores resound triumphant cries, Fill all the seas, and thunder thro' the skies.
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## AN ESSAY ON MIND

Brama assai, poco spera, e nulla chiede.—TASSO.

## PREFACE TO THE FIRST EDITION, 1826

IN offering this little volume to the world, it is not my intention to trespass long on its indulgence, 'with prefaces, and passages, and excusations.' As, however, preface-writing strangely reminds one of Bottom's prologuizing device, which so ingeniously sheweth the 'disfiguration of moonshine,' and how lion was no lion after all, but plain 'Snug the joiner,' I will treat the subject according to my great prototype; declaring to those readers who 'cannot abide lions,' that their 'parlous fear' is here unnecessary, and assuring the public that 'moonshine' shall be introduced as seldom as is consistent with modern composition.

But something more is necessary; and since writers commonly make use of their prefaces as opportunities for auricular

confession to the absolving reader, I am prepared to acknowledge, with unfeigned humility, that the imputation of presumption is likely to be attached to me, on account of the form and title of this production. And yet, to imagine that a confidence in our powers is undeviatingly shown by our selection of an extensive field for their exertion, is an error; for the subject supports the writer, as much as it is supported by him. It is not difficult to draw a succession of affecting images from objects intrinsically affecting; and ideas arising from an elevated subject are naturally elevated. As Tacitus hath it, 'materia aluntur.' Thought catches the light reflected from the object of her contemplation, and, 'expanded by the genius of the spot,' loses much of her material

grossness; unless indeed, like Thales, she fall into the water while looking at the stars.

'Ethical poetry,' says that immortal writer we have lost, 'is the highest of all poetry, as the highest of all earthly objects must be moral truth.' I am nevertheless aware how often it has been asserted that poetry is not a proper vehicle for abstract ideas—how far the assertion may be correct, is with me a matter of doubt. We do not deem the imaginative incompatible with the philosophic, for the name of Bacon is on our lips; then why should we expel the argumentative from the limits of the poetic? If indeed we consider Poetry as Plato considered her, when he banished her from his republic; or as Newton, when he termed her 'a kind of ingenious nonsense'; or as Locke, when he pronounced that 'gaming and poetry went usually together'; or as Boileau, when he boasted of being acquainted with two arts equally useful to mankind—'writing verses, and playing at skittles,'—we shall find no difficulty in assenting to this opinion. But while we behold in poetry the inspirings to political feeling, the 'monumentum aere perennius' of buried nations, we are loath to believe her unequal to the higher walks of intellect: when we behold the works of the great though erring Lucretius, the sublime Dante, the reasoning Pope—when we hear Quintilian acknowledge the submission due from Philosophers to Poets, and Gibbon declare Homer to be 'the law-giver, the theologian, the historian, and the philosopher of the ancients,' we are *unable* to believe it. Poetry is the enthusiasm of the understanding; and, as Milton finely expresses it, there is 'a high reason in her fancies.'

As, according to the plan of my work, I have dwelt less on the operations of the mind than on their effects, so I have not touched on that point difficult to argue, and impossible to determine—the nature of her substance. The investigation is curious, and the subject a glorious one; but, after all, our closest reasonings thereupon are acquired from analogy, and our most extensive views must be content to

take their places among other ingenious speculations. The columns of Hercules are yet unpassed. Metaphysicians have cavilled and confuted; but they have failed in their endeavour to establish any permanent theoretical edifice on that windy site. The effort was vainly made even by our enlightened Locke; and, as in the days of Socratic disputation, it is still given to the learned to ask, though not to answer, 'τί δὲ ἡ ψυχὴ.' Perhaps, however, the following sensible acknowledgment would better become their human lips, than the most artfully constructed hypothesis—The things we understand are so excellent, that we believe what we do not understand to be likewise excellent<sup>1</sup>.

The effects of mental operation, or productions of the mind, I have divided into two classes—the philosophical, and the poetical; the former of which I have subdivided into three divisions—History, Physics, and Metaphysics: History, or the doctrine of man, as an active and social being; Physics, or the doctrine of efficient causes; Metaphysics, or the doctrine of abstractions, and final causes. Lord Bacon's comprehensive discernment of the whole, and Locke's acute penetration into parts, have assisted me in my trembling endeavour to trace the outline of these branches of knowledge. To have considered them methodically, and in detail, would have greatly exceeded both the limits of my volume, and, what is more material, the extent of my information: but if I may be allowed to hope that

The lines, though touch'd thus faintly, are drawn right,

I shall have nothing left to wish.

Poetry is treated in as cursory a manner as Philosophy, though not precisely for the same reasons. I have been deterred from a further development of her nature and principles, by observing that no single subject has employed the didactic pen with such frequent success, and by a consequent unwillingness to incur a charge of tediousness, when repeating what is well known, or one of presumption,

<sup>1</sup> I here adopt, with some little variation, an expression which fell from Socrates, on the subject of a work by Heraclitus the obscure.

when intruding new-fangled maxims in the place of those deservedly established. The act of white-washing an ancient Gothic edifice would be less indicative of bad taste than the latter attempt. Since the time of Horace, many excellent didactic writers have formed poetic systems from detached passages of that unsystematic work, his *Ars Poetica*. Pope and Boileau, in their Essays on Poetry and Criticism, have with superior method traced his footsteps. And yet, 'haud passibus aequis'—it is only justice to observe, that though the poem has been excelled, the poet remains unequalled. For the merits of his imitators are, except in arrangement, Horace's merits, while the merits of Horace are his own<sup>1</sup>.

I wish that the sublime circuit of intellect, embraced by the plan of my poem, had fallen to the lot of a spirit more powerful than mine. I wish it had fallen to the lot of one familiar with the dwelling-place of Mind, who could search her secret chambers, and call forth those that sleep; or of one who could enter into her temples, and cast out the iniquitous who buy and sell, profaning the sanctuary of God; or of one who could try the golden links of that chain which hangs from Heaven to

earth, and show that it is not placed there for man to covet for lucre's sake, or for him to weigh his puny strength at one end against Omnipotence at the other; but that it is placed there to join, in mysterious union, the natural and the spiritual, the mortal and the eternal, the creature and the Creator. I wish the subject of my poem had fallen into such hands, that the powers of the execution might have equalled the vastness of the design—and the public will wish so too. But as it is—though I desire this field to be more meritoriously occupied by others—I would mitigate the voice of censure for myself. I would endeavour to show, that while I may have often erred, I have not clung willingly to error; and that while I may have failed in representing, I have never ceased to love Truth. If there be much to condemn in the following pages, let my narrow capacity, as opposed to the infinite object it would embrace, be generously considered; if there be any thing to approve, I am ready to acknowledge the assistance which my illustrations have received from the exalting nature of their subject—as the waters of Halys acquire a peculiar taste from the soil over which they flow.

## AN ESSAY ON MIND

My narrow leaves cannot in them containe  
The large discourse.—SPENSER.

### ANALYSIS OF BOOK I

THE poem commences by remarking the desire, natural to the mind, of investigating its own qualities—qualities the more exalted, as their development has seldom been impeded by external circumstances—The various dispositions of different minds are next considered, and are compared to the varieties of scenic nature; inequalities in the spiritual not being more wonderful than inequalities in the natural—Byron and Campbell contrasted—The varieties of genius having been thus treated, the art of criticism is briefly alluded to, as generally independent of genius, but always useful to its productions—Jeffrey—The various stages of life in which genius appears, and the different causes

by which its influence is discovered—Cowley, Alfieri—Allusion to the story of the emotion of Thucydides on hearing Herodotus recite his History at the Olympic Games—The elements of Mind are thus arranged, Invention, Judgement, Memory, and Association—The creations of mind are next noticed, among which we first behold Philosophy—History, Science, and Metaphysics are included in the studies of Philosophy.

Of History, it is observed, that though on a cursory view her task of recalling the past may appear of little avail, it is in reality one of the highest importance—The living are sent for a lesson to the grave—The present state of Rome alluded to; and the future state of England anticipated—Condemnation of those who deprive historical facts of their moral influence, and only make use of their basis to render falsehood more secure—Gibbon—Condemnation of those who would colour the political

<sup>1</sup> He is indebted to Aristotle, which, however, cannot be said to affect his poetical originality.

conduct of past ages with their own political feelings—Hume, Mitford—From the writers, we turn to the readers of history—Their extreme scepticism, or credulity—They are recommended to be guided by no faction, but to measure facts by their consistency with reason; to study the personal character and circumstances of an historian before they give entire credit to his representations—The influence of private feeling and prejudice—Miller—Science is introduced—Apostrophe to man—Episode of Archimedes—Parallel between history and science—The pride of the latter considered most excessive—The risk attending knowledge—Buffon, Leibnitz—The advantageous experience to be derived from the errors of others illustrated by an allusion to Southey's Hexameters—Utility the object of Science—An exclusive attention to parts deprecated, since it is impossible even to have a just idea of PARTS without acquiring a knowledge of their relative situation in the whole—The extreme difficulty of enlarging the contemplations of a mind long accustomed to contracted views—The scale of knowledge; every science being linked with the one preceding and succeeding, giving and receiving reciprocal support—Why this system is not calculated, as might be conjectured, either to render scientific men superficial, or to intrude on the operations of genius—That the danger of knowledge originates in PARTIAL knowledge—Apostrophe to Newton.

## BOOK I

SINCE Spirit first inspired, pervaded all,  
And Mind met Matter at th' Eternal call—  
Since dust weighed Genius down, or  
Genius gave  
Th' immortal halo to the mortal's grave—  
Th' ambitious soul her essence hath  
defined,  
And Mind hath eulogized the powers of  
Mind.  
Ere Revelation's holy light began  
To strengthen Nature, and illumine Man—  
When Genius, on Icarian pinions, flew,  
And Nature's pencil Nature's portrait  
drew—  
When Reason shuddered at her own  
wan beam,  
And Hope turned pale beneath the sickly  
gleam—  
Even then hath Mind's triumphant in-  
fluence spoke,  
Dust owned the spell, and Plato's spirit  
woke,  
Spread her eternal wings, and rose sub-  
lime  
Beyond th' expanse of circumstance and  
time :

Blinded, but free, with faith instinctive  
soared,  
And found her home where prostrate  
saints adored !  
Thou thing of light ! that warm'st the  
breasts of men,  
Breath'st from the lips, and tremblest  
from the pen !  
Thou, formed at once t' astonish, fire,  
beguile—  
With Bacon reason, and with Shake-  
speare smile !  
The subtle cause, ethereal essence ! say,  
Why dust rules dust, and clay surpasses  
clay ;  
Why a like mass of atoms should combine  
To form a Tully and a Catiline ?  
Or why, with flesh perchance of equal  
weight,  
One cheers a prize-fight, and one frees  
a state ?  
Why do not I the muse of Homer call,  
Or why, indeed, did Homer sing at all ?  
Why wrote not Blackstone upon love's  
delusion,  
Or Moore a libel on the Constitution ?  
Why must the faithful page refuse to tell  
That Dante, Laura sang, and Petrarch,  
Hell—  
That Tom Paine argued in the throne's  
defence—  
That Byron nonsense wrote, and Thur-  
low sense—  
That Southey sighed with all a patriot's  
cares,  
While Locke gave utterance to Hexa-  
meters ?  
Thou thing of light ! instruct my pen to find  
Th' unequal powers, the various forms  
of Mind !  
O'er Nature's changeful face direct your  
sight ;  
View light meet shade, and shade dis-  
solve in light !  
Mark, from the plain, the cloud-capped  
mountain soar ;  
The sullen ocean spurn the desert shore !  
Behold, afar, the playmate of the storm,  
Wild Niagara lifts his awful form—  
Spits his black foam above the madd'ning  
floods,  
Himself the savage of his native woods—

See him, in air, his smoking torrents wheel, While the rocks totter, and the forests reel— Then, giddy, turn! lo! Shakespeare's Avon flows, Charmed, by the green-sward's kiss, to soft repose; With tranquil brow reflects the smile of fame, And, 'midst her sedges, sighs her Poet's name.	To some Utopian strand, some fairy shore, Shall soft-eyed Fancy waft her Campbell o'er! Wont o'er the lyre of Hope his hand to fling, And never waken a discordant string; Who ne'er grows awkward by affecting grace, Or 'common sense confounds with com- mon-place'; To bright conception adds expression chaste, And human feeling joins to classic taste: For still, with magic art, he knows, and knew, To touch the heart, and win the judge- ment too!
Thus, in bright sunshine and alternate storms, Is various mind expressed in various forms. In equal men, why burns not equal fire? Why are not valleys hills,—or mountains higher? Her destined way hath destined Nature trod; While Matter, Spirit rules, and Spirit, God.	Thus, in uncertain radiance, Genius glows, And fitful gleams on various mind be- stows: While Mind, exulting in th' admitted day, On various themes reflects its kindling ray. Unequal forms receive an equal light; And Klopstock wrote what Kepler could not write.
Let outward scenes, for inward sense designed, Call back our wand'rings to the world of Mind! Where Reason, o'er her vasty realms, may stand, Convene proud thoughts, and stretch her sceptred hand. Here, classic recollections breathe around; Here, living Glory consecrates the ground; And here, Mortality's deep waters span The shores of Genius and the paths of Man!	Yet Fame hath welcomed a less noble few, And Glory hailed whom Genius never knew; Art laboured Nature's birthright to secure, And forged, with cunning hand, her sig- nature. The scale of life is linked by close degrees; Motes float in sunbeams, mites exist in cheese; Critics seize half the fame which bards receive, And Shakespeare suffers that his friends may live; While Bentley leaves, on stilts, the beaten track, And peeps at glory from some ancient's back.
O'er this imagined land your soul direct— Mark Byron, the Mont Blanc of intellect, 'Twixt earth and heaven exalt his brow sublime, O'erlook the nations, and shake hands with Time! Stretched at his feet do Nature's beauties throng, The flowers of love, the gentleness of song; Above, the Avalanche's thunder speaks, While Terror's spirit walks abroad, and shrieks!	But though to hold a lantern to the sun Be not too wise, and were as well un- done— Though, e'en in this inventive age, alas! A moral darkness can't be cured by gas—

And though we may not reasonably deem  
How poets' craniums can be turned by  
steam—

Yet own we, in our juster reasonings,  
That lanterns, gas, and steam are useful  
things ;

And oft this truth Reflection ponders  
o'er—

Bards would write worse if critics wrote  
no more.

Let Jeffrey's praise our willing pen en-  
gage,

The lettered critic of a lettered age !  
Who justly judges, rightfully discerns,  
With wisdom teaches and with candour  
learns.

His name on Scotia's brightest tablet  
lives,

And proudly claims the laurel that it  
gives.

Eternal Genius ! fashioned like the sun,  
To make all beautiful thou look'st upon !  
Prometheus of our earth ! whose kindling  
smile

May warm the things of clay a little  
while ;

Till by thy touch inspired, thine eyes  
surveyed,

Thou stoop'st to love the glory thou hast  
made,

And weep'st, human-like, the mortal's  
fall,

When by and by a breath disperses all.  
Eternal Genius ! mystic essence ! say,  
How on 'the chosen breast' descends  
thy day !

Breaks it at once in Thought's celestial  
dream,

While Nature trembles at the sudden  
gleam ?

Or steals it gently, like the morning's  
light,

Shedding, unmarked, an influence soft  
and bright,

Till all the landscape gather on the sight ?

As different talents, different breasts in-  
spire,

So different causes wake the latent fire.  
The gentle Cowley of our native clime  
Lisp'd his first accents in Aonian rime.

Alfieri's startling muse tuned not her  
strings,

And dumbly looked 'unutterable things' ;  
Till, when six lustrums o'er his head had  
past,

Conception found expression's voice at  
last ;

Broke the bright light, uprose the  
smothered flame,

And Mind and Nature owned their poet's  
fame !

To some the waving woods, the harp of  
spring,

A gently-breathing inspiration bring !  
Some hear from Nature's haunts her  
whispered call ;

And Mind hath triumphed by an apple's  
fall.

Wave Fancy's picturing wand ! recall  
the scene

Which Mind hath hallowed—where her  
sons have been—

Where, 'midst Olympia's concourse,  
simply great,

Th' historic sage, the son of Lyxes, sate,  
Grasping th' immortal scroll : he breathed  
no sound,

But, calm in strength, an instant looked  
around,

And rose—the tone of expectation rushed  
Through th' eager throng—he spake,  
and Greece was hushed !

See, in that breathless crowd, Olorus  
stand,

While one fair boy hangs, list'ning, on  
his hand—

The young Thucydides ! with upward  
brow

Of radiance, and dark eye, that beaming  
now

Full on the speaker, drinks th' inspired  
air—

Gazing entranced and turned to marble  
there !

Yet not to marble—for the wild emotion  
Is kindling on his cheek, like light on  
ocean,

Coming to vanish ; and his pulses throb  
With transport, and the inarticulate sob

Swells to his lip—internal nature leaps  
To glorious life, and all th' historian

weeps !

The mighty master marked the favoured child—  
 Did Genius linger there? She did, and smiled!  
 Still on itself let Mind its eye direct,  
 To view the elements of intellect—  
 How wild Invention (daring artist!) plies  
 Her magic pencil, and creating dies;  
 And Judgement near the living canvas stands,  
 To blend the colours for her airy hands;  
 While Memory waits, with twilight mists o'ercast,  
 To mete the length'ning shadows of the past:  
 And bold Association, not untaught,  
 The links of fact unites with links of thought;  
 Forming th' electric chains which mystic bind  
 Scholastic learning and reflective mind.

Let reasoning Truth's unerring glance survey  
 The fair creations of the mental ray;  
 Her holy lips, with just discernment, teach  
 The forms, the attributes, the modes of each;  
 And tell, in simple words, the narrow span  
 That circles intellect and fetters man;  
 Where darkling mists o'er Time's last footstep creep,  
 And Genius drops her languid wing—to weep.

See first Philosophy's mild spirit, nigh,  
 Raise the rapt brow and lift the thoughtful eye;  
 Whether the glimmering lamp, that History gave,  
 Light her enduring steps to some lone grave,  
 The while she dreams on him asleep beneath,  
 And conjures mystic thoughts of life and death:  
 Whether, on Science' rushing wings, she sweep  
 From concave heaven to earth, and search the deep,

Showing the pensile globe attraction's force,  
 The tides their mistress, and the stars their course:  
 Or whether (task with nobler object fraught)  
 She turn the powers of thinking back on thought—  
 With mind, delineate mind; and dare define  
 The point, where human mingles with divine:  
 Majestic still, her solemn form shall stand,  
 To show the beacon on the distant land—  
 Of thought and nature chronicler sublime!  
 The world her lesson, and her teacher Time!

And when, with half a smile and half a sigh,  
 She lifts old History's faded tapestry  
 I' the dwelling of past years, she ay is seen  
 Point to the shades, where bright'ning tints had been—  
 The shapeless forms outworn and mildewed o'er—  
 And bids us reverence what was loved before;  
 Gives the dank wreath and dusty urn to fame,  
 And lends its ashes—all she can—a name.  
 Think'st thou in vain, while pale Time glides away,  
 She rakes cold graves and chronicles their clay?  
 Think'st thou in vain she counts the bony things  
 Once loved as patriots, or obeyed as kings?  
 Lifts she in vain the past's mysterious veil?  
 Seest thou no moral in her awful tale?  
 Can man the crumbling pile of nations scan,  
 And is their mystic language mute for man?

Go! let the tomb its silent lesson give,  
 And let the dead instruct thee how to live!  
 If Tully's page hath bade thy spirit burn  
 And lit the raptured cheek—behold his urn!

If Maro's strains thy soaring fancy guide,  
That hail 'th' eternal city' in their pride—  
Then turn to mark, in some reflective  
hour,  
The immortality of mortal power!  
See the crushed column and the ruined  
dome—  
'Tis all Eternity has left of Rome!  
While travelled crowds, with curious  
gaze, repair  
To read the littleness of greatness there!

Alas! alas! so Albion shall decay,  
And all my country's glory pass away!  
So shall she perish, as the mighty must,  
And be Italia's rival—in the dust;  
While her ennobled sons, her cities fair,  
Be dimly thought of 'midst the things  
that were!  
Alas! alas! her fields of pleasant green,  
Her woods of beauty, and each well-  
known scene!  
Soon o'er her plains shall grisly Ruin  
haste,  
And the gay vale become the silent waste!  
Ah! soon perchance, our native tongue  
forgot,  
The land may hear strange words it  
knoweth not;  
And the dear accents which our bosoms  
move  
With sounds of friendship, or with tones  
of love,  
May pass away; or, conned on mould-  
'ring page,  
Gleam 'neath the midnight lamp for  
unborn sage;  
To tell our dream-like tale to future years,  
And wake th' historian's smile, and  
schoolboy's tears!

Majestic task! to join, though placed afar,  
The things that have been with the  
things that are!  
Important trust! the awful dead to scan,  
And teach mankind to moralize from man!  
Stupendous charge! when on the record  
true  
Depend the dead, and hang the living too!  
And, oh! thrice impious he who dares  
abuse  
That solemn charge, and good and ill  
confuse!

Thrice guilty he who, false with 'words  
of sooth,'  
Would pay to Prejudice his debt to Truth;  
The hallowed page of fleeting Time pro-  
fane,  
And prove to Man that man has lived in  
vain;  
Pass the cold grave with colder jestings  
by;  
And use the truth to illustrate a lie!

Let Gibbon's name be traced in sorrow  
here—  
Too great to spurn, too little to revere!  
Who followed Reason, yet forgot her  
laws,  
And found all causes but the 'great first  
Cause':  
The paths of time with guideless footsteps  
trod,  
Blind to the light of nature and of God;  
Deaf to the voice, amid the past's dread  
hour,  
Which sounds His praise and chronicles  
His power!  
In vain for *him* was Truth's fair tablet  
spread  
When Prejudice, with jaundiced organs,  
read.  
In vain for *us* the polished periods flow,  
The fancy kindles, and the pages glow,  
When one bright hour, and startling  
transport past,  
The musing soul must turn—to sigh at  
last.  
Still let the page be luminous and just,  
Nor private feeling war with public trust;  
Still let the pen from narrowing views  
forbear,  
And modern faction ancient freedom  
spare.  
But, ah! too oft th' historian bends his  
mind  
To flatter party—not to serve mankind;  
To make the dead in living feuds engage,  
And give all time the feelings of his age.  
Great Hume hath stooped the Stuarts'  
fame t' increase,  
And ultra Mitford soared to libel Greece!  
Yet must the candid muse, impartial, learn  
To trace the errors which her eyes dis-  
cern;

View every side, investigate each part,  
And get the holy scroll of Truth by heart;  
No blame misplaced, and yet no fault forgot—  
Like ink employed to write with—not to blot.  
Hence, while historians just réproof incur,  
We find some readers, with their authors, err;  
And soon discover, that as few excel  
In reading justly, as in writing well.  
For prejudice, or ignorance, is such,  
That men believe too little or too much;  
Too apt to cavil, or too glad to trust,  
With confidence misplaced, or blame unjust.

Seek out no faction—no peculiar school—  
But lean on Reason as your safest rule;  
Let doubtful facts with patient hand be led,  
To take their place on this Procrustean bed!

What plainly fits not may be thrown aside

Without the censure of pedantic pride:  
For nature still to just proportion clings,  
And human reason judges natural things.  
Moreover, in th' historian's bosom look,  
And weigh his feelings ere you trust his book;

His private friendships, private wrongs, descry,

Where tend his passions, where his interests lie—

And while his proper faults your mind engage,

Discern the ruling foibles of his age.

Hence, when on deep research, the work you find

A too obtrusive transcript of his mind;  
When you perceive a fact too highly wrought,

Which kindly seems to prove a fav'rite thought;

Or some opposing truth traced briefly out,

With hand of careless speed—then turn to doubt!

For private feeling like the taper glows,  
And here a light and there a shadow throws.

If some gay picture, vily daubed, were seen

With grass of azure and a sky of green,  
Th' impatient laughter we'd suppress in vain,

And deem the painter jesting, or insane.  
But when the sun of blinding prejudice  
Glares in our faces, it deceives our eyes;  
Truth appears falsehood to the dazzled sight,

The comment apes the fact, and black seems white;

Commingle hues, their separate colours lost,

Dance wildly on, in bright confusion lost;  
And, midst their drunken whirl, the giddy eye

Beholds one shapeless blot for earth and sky.

Of such delusions let the mind take heed,  
And learn to think, or wisely cease to read;

And if a style of laboured grace display  
Perverted feelings in a pleasing way—  
False tints on real objects brightly laid,  
Facts in disguise, and Truth in masquerade—

If cheating thoughts in beauteous dress appear,

With magic sound, to captivate the ear—  
Th' enchanting poison of that page decline,

Or drink Circean draughts—and turn to swine!

We hail with British pride and ready praise

Enlightened Miller of our modern days!  
Too firm though temp'rate, liberal though exact,

To give too much to argument or fact,  
To love details and draw no moral thence,  
Or seek the comment and forget the sense:  
He leaves all vulgar aims, and strives alone

To find the ways of Truth, and make them known!

Spirit of life! for aye with heavenly breath  
Warm the dull clay and cold abodes of death!

Clasp in its urn the consecrated dust,  
And bind a laurel round the broken bust;

While 'mid decaying tombs, thy pensive  
choice,

Thou bid'st the silent utter forth a voice,  
To prompt the actors of our busy scene,  
And tell what *is*, the tale of what *has been*!

Yet turn, Philosophy! with brow sublime  
Shall Science follow on the steps of  
Time!

As o'er Thought's measureless depths we  
bend to hear

The whispered sound which stole on  
Descartes' ear,

Hallowing the sunny visions of his youth  
With that eternal mandate, 'Search for  
Truth!'

Yes! search for Truth—the glorious path  
is free;

Mind shows her dwelling, Nature holds  
the key:

Yes! search for Truth—her tongue shall  
bid thee scan

The book of knowledge, for the use of  
Man!

Man! Man! thou poor antithesis of  
power!

Child of all time! yet creature of an hour!  
By turns chameleon of a thousand forms,  
The lord of empires, and the food of  
worms!

The little conqueror of a petty space,  
The more than mighty, or the worse than  
base!

Thou ruined landmark in the desert way,  
Betwixt the all of glory and decay!

Fair beams the torch of Science in thine  
hand,

And sheds its brightness o'er the glim-  
mering land;

While in thy native grandeur, bold and  
free,

Thou bid'st the wilds of nature smile for  
thee,

And treadest Ocean's paths full royally!  
Earth yields her treasures up; celestial  
air

Receives thy globe of life when, journey-  
ing there,

It bounds from dust, and bends its course  
on high,

And walks in beauty through the wonder-  
ing sky.

And yet, proud clay! thine empire is  
a span,

Nor all thy greatness makes thee more  
than man!

While Knowledge, Science, only serve  
t' impart

The god thou *wouldst* be, and the  
thing thou *art*!

Where stands the Syracusan, while the  
roar

Of men and engines echoes through the  
shore?

Where stands the Syracusan. Haggard  
Fate,

With ghastly smile, is sitting at the gate;  
And Death forgets his silence 'midst the  
crash

Of rushing ruins; and the torches' flash  
Waves redly on the straggling forms  
that die;

And masterless steeds beneath that  
gleam dart by,

Scared into madness by the battle-cry;  
And sounds are hurtling in the angry air,  
Of hate, and pain, and vengeance, and  
despair—

The smothered voice of babes—the long,  
wild shriek

Of mothers, and the curse the dying  
speak!

Where stands the Syracusan? Tranquil  
sage,

He bends sublime o'er Science' splendid  
page,

Walks the high circuit of extended mind,  
Surpasses man, and dreams not of man-  
kind;

While on his listless ear the battle-shout  
Falls senseless—as if echo breathed about  
The hum of many words, the laughing  
glee

Which lingered there when Syracuse  
was free.

Away! away! for louder accents fall—  
But not the sounds of joy from marble hall!  
Quick steps approach—but not of sylphic  
feet

Whose echo heralded a smile more sweet,  
Coming, all sport, th' indulgent sage t'  
upbraid

For lonely hours, to studious musing  
paid.

Be hushed! Destruction bares the flickering blade!

He asked to live, th' unfinished lines to fill,

And died—to solve a problem deeper still.

He died, the glorious! who, with soaring sight,

Sought some new world to plant his foot of might;

Thereon in solitary pride to stand,  
And lift our planet with a master's hand!

He sank in death—Creation only gave  
That thorn-encumbered space which  
forms his grave—

An unknown grave, till Tully chanced  
to stray,

And named the spot where Archimedes  
lay!

Genius! behold the limit of thy power!  
Thou fir'st the soul, but, when life's  
dream is o'er,

Giv'st not the silent pulse one throb the  
more:

And mighty beings come and pass away,  
Like other comets, and like other—clay.

Though analysing Truth must still divide  
Historic state and scientific pride,  
Yet one stale fact our judging thoughts  
infer—

Since each is human, each is prone to  
err!

Oft in the night of Time doth History  
stray,

And lift her lantern and proclaim it day!  
And oft when day's eternal glories shine

Doth Science, boasting, cry—'The light  
is mine!'

So hard to bear, with unobstructed sight,  
Th' excess of darkness or th' extreme of  
light.

Yet, to be just, though faults belong to  
each,

The themes of one an humbler moral  
teach:

And, 'midst th' historian's eloquence  
and skill,

The human chronicler is human still.  
If on past power his eager thoughts be  
cast,

It brings an awful antidote—'tis past!

If deathless fame his ravished organs  
scan,

The deathless fame exists for buried  
man:

Power and decay at once he turns to view,  
And, with the strength, beholds the  
weakness too.

Not so doth Science' musing son aspire,  
And pierce creation with his eye of fire.

Yon mystic pilgrims of the starry way  
No humbling lesson to his soul convey;

No tale of change their changeless course  
hath taught,

And works divine excite no earthward  
thought.

And still he, reckless, builds the splendid  
dream;

And still his pride increases with his  
theme;

And still the cause is slighted in th' effect;  
And still self-worship follows self-

respect:  
Too apt to watch the engines of the  
scene,

And lose the hand which moves the vast  
machine;

View Matter's form, and not its moving  
soul;

Interpret parts, and misconceive the  
whole:

While, darkly musing 'twixt the earth  
and sky,

His heart grows narrow, as his hopes  
grow high;

And quits for aye, with unavailing loss,  
The sympathies of earth, but not the

dress;

Till Time sweeps down the fabric of his  
trust,

And life and riches turn to death and dust.

And such is Man! 'neath Error's foul  
assaults

His noblest moods beget his grossest  
faults!

When Knowledge lifts her hues of  
varied grace,

The fair exotic of a brighter place,  
To keep her stem, from mundane blasts,

enshrined,  
He makes a fatal hot-bed of his mind;

Too oft adapted, in their growth, to spoil  
The natural beauties of a generous soil.

Ah ! such is Man ! thus strong, and weak  
 withal,  
 His rise oft renders him too prone to fall !  
 The loftiest hills' fresh tints the soonest  
 fade,  
 And highest buildings cast the deepest  
 shade !

So Buffon erred ; amidst his chilling  
 dream,  
 The judgement grew material as the  
 theme :

Musing on Matter, till he called away  
 The modes of Mind to form the modes  
 of clay ;

And made, confusing each, with judge-  
 ment blind,

Mind stoop to dust, and dust ascend to  
 Mind.

So Leibnitz erred, when, in the starry  
 hour,

He read no weakness where was written  
 ' Power ' ;

Beheld the verdant earth, the circling  
 sea,

Nor dreamt so fair a world could cease  
 to be !

Yea ! but he heard the Briton's awful  
 name,

As, scattering darkness, in his might he  
 came,

Girded with Truth, and earnest to confute  
 What gave to Matter Mind's best attri-  
 bute.

Sternly they strove—th' unequal race  
 was run !

The owlet met the eagle at the sun !

While such defects their various forms  
 unfold,

And rust so foul obscures the brightest  
 gold,

Let Science' soaring sons the ballast cast,  
 But judge their present errors by their  
 past ;

As some poor wanderer in the darkness  
 goes,

When fitful wind, in hollow murmur,  
 blows,

Hailing, with trembling joy, the light-  
 ning's ray,

Which threatens his safety, but illumines his  
 way.

Gross faults buy deep experience. Sages  
 tell

That Truth, like Aesop's fox, is in a well ;  
 And, like the goat his fable prates about,  
 Fools must stay in, that wise men may  
 get out.

What thousand scribblers of our age  
 would choose

To throw a toga round the English muse,  
 Rending her garb of ease, which grace-  
 ful grew .

From Dryden's loom, beprankt with  
 varied hue !

In that dull aim, by Mind unsanctified,  
 What thousand Wits would have their  
 wits belied,

Devoted Southey ! if thou hadst not  
 tried !

Use is the aim of Science ; this the end  
 The wise appreciate, and the good com-  
 mend.

For not, like babes, the flaming torch  
 we prize,

That sparkling lustre may attract our  
 eyes ;

But that, when evening shades impede  
 the sight,

It casts on objects round a useful light.

Use is the aim of Science ! give again  
 A golden sentence to the faithful pen—  
*Dwell, not on parts !* for parts contract  
 the mind ;

And knowledge still is useless, when  
 confined.

The yearning soul, enclosed in narrow  
 bound,

May be ingenious, but is ne'er profound :  
 Spoiled of its strength, the fettered  
 thought grows tame ;

And want of air extinguishes the flame !  
 And as the sun, beheld in mid-day blaze,  
 Seems turned to darkness, as we strive  
 to gaze ;

So mental vigour, on one object cast,  
 That object's self becomes obscured at  
 last.

'Tis easy, as Experience may aver,  
 To pass from general to particular,  
 But most laborious to direct the soul  
 From studying parts to reason on the  
 whole :

Thoughts, trained on narrow subjects,  
to let fall;  
And learn the unison of each with all.

In Nature's reign a scale of life we find :  
A scale of knowledge we behold in mind ;  
With each progressive link our steps  
ascend,  
And traverse all before they reach the  
end ;  
Searching, while Reason's powers may  
farther go,  
The things we know not by the things  
we know.

But hold ! methinks some sons of Thought  
demand,  
' Why strive to form the Trajan's vase  
in sand ?  
Are Reason's paths so few, that Mind  
may call  
Her finite energies to tread them all ?  
Lo ! Learning's waves in bounded channel  
sweep ;  
When they flow wider, shall they run as  
deep ?  
Shall that broad surface no dull shallow  
hide,  
Growing dank weeds of superficial pride ?  
Then Heaven may leave our giant powers  
alone,  
Nor give each soul a focus of its own !  
Genius bestows in vain the chosen page  
If all the tome the minds of all engage !'

Nay ! I reply—with free congenial breast  
Let each peruse the part which suits him  
best !

But, lest contracting prejudice mislead,  
Regard the context as he turns to read !  
Hence, liberal feeling gives th' en-  
lightened soul  
The spirit with the letter of the scroll.

With what triumphant joy, what glad  
surprise,  
The dull behold the dullness of the wise !  
What insect tribes of brainless impudence  
Buzz round the carcass of perverted  
sense !  
What railing idiots hunt, from classic  
school,  
Each flimsy sage and scientific fool,

Crying, 'Tis well ! we see the blest effect  
Of watchful night and toiling intellect !'  
Yet let them pause, and tremble—vainly  
glad ;

For too much learning maketh no man  
mad !  
Too little dims the sight, and leads us o'er  
The twilight path, where fools have been  
before ;  
With not enough of Reason's radiance  
seen  
To track the footsteps where those fools  
have been.

Divinest Newton ! if my pen may show  
A name so mighty in a verse so low—  
Still let the sons of Science, joyful, claim  
The bright example of that splendid  
name !  
Still let their lips repeat, my page be-  
speak,  
The sage how learnèd ! and the man how  
meek !  
Too wise, to think his human folly less ;  
Too great, to doubt his proper littleness ;  
Too strong, to deem his weakness passed  
away ;  
Too high in soul, to glory in his clay :  
Rich in all nature, but her erring side :  
Endowed with all of Science—but its  
pride.

## ANALYSIS OF BOOK II

Metaphysics—Address to Metaphysicians—  
The most considerable portion of their errors  
conceived to arise from difficulties attending  
the use of words—That on one hand, thoughts  
become obscure without the assistance of  
language, while on the other, language from  
its material analogy deteriorates from spiritual  
meaning—Allusion to a probable mode of  
communication between spirits after death—  
That a limited respect, though not a servile  
submission, is due to verbal distinctions—  
Clearness of style peculiarly necessary to  
Metaphysical subjects—The graces of Com-  
position not inconsistent with them—Plato,  
Bacon, Bolingbroke—The extremes into which  
Philosophers have fallen with regard to sen-  
sation and reflection—Berkeley, Condillac—That  
subject briefly considered—Abstractions—  
Longinus, Burke, Price, Payne Knight—  
Blind submission to authorities deprecated—  
The Pythagorean saying opposed, and Cicero's  
unphilosophical assertion alluded to—That,  
however, it partakes of injustice to love Truth,

and yet refuse our homage to the advocates of Truth—How the names of great writers become endeared to us by early recollections—Description of the schoolboy's first intellectual gratifications—That even without reference to the past, some immortal names are entitled to our veneration, since they are connected with Truth—Bacon—Apostrophe to Locke.

Poetry is introduced—More daring than Philosophy, she personifies abstractions, and brings the things unseen before the eye of the Mind—How often reason is indebted to poetic imagery—Irving—The poetry of prose—Plato's ingratitude—Philosophers and Poets contrasted—An attempt to define Poetry—That the passions make use of her language—Nature the poet's study—Shakespeare—Human nature as seen in cities—Scenic nature, and how the mind is affected thereby—That Poetry exists not in the object contemplated but is created by the contemplating mind—The ideal—Observations on the structure of verse, as adapted to the subject treated—Milton, Horace, Pope—The French Drama—Corneille, Racine—Harmony and chasteness of versification—The poem proceeds to argue, that the Muse will refuse her inspiration to a soul unattuned to generous sympathy, unkindled by the deeds of Virtue, or the voice of Freedom—Contemptuous notice of those prompted only by interest to aspire to poetic eminence—What should be the Poet's best guerison—From the contemplation of motives connected with Freedom, we are led by no unnatural transition to Greece—Her present glorious struggle—Anticipation of her ultimate independence, and the restoration of the Muses to their ancient seats—Allusion to the death of Byron—Reflections on Mortality—The terrors of death as beheld by the light of Nature—The consolations of death as beheld with reference to a future state—Contemplation of the immortality of Mind, and her perfected powers—Conclusion.

## BOOK II

BUT now to higher themes! no more confined

To copy Nature, Mind returns to Mind.  
We leave the throng, so nobly and so well  
Tracing, in Wisdom's book, things visible,  
And turn to things unseen; where,  
greatly wrought,

Soul questions soul, and thought revolves  
on thought.

My spirit loves, my voice shall hail ye,  
now,

Sons of the patient eye and passionless  
brow!

Students sublime! Earth, man, unmoved,  
ye view,

Time, circumstance; for what are they  
to you?

What is the crash of world  
kings—

When worlds and monarchs  
brittle things?

What the tost, shatt  
blindly dares

A sea of storm! Ye sketch the wave  
which bears!

The cause, and not th' effect, your  
thoughts exact;

The principle of action, not the act,—  
The soul! the soul! and, 'midst so grand  
a task,

Ye call her rushing passions, and ye ask  
Whence are ye? and each mystic thing  
responds!

I would be all ye are—except those  
bonds!

Except those bonds! Even here is oft  
descried

The love to parts, the poverty of pride!  
Even here, while Mind in Mind's horizon  
springs,

Her 'native mud' is weighing on her  
wings!

Even here, while Truth invites the ardent  
crowd,

Ixion-like, they rush t' embrace a cloud!  
Even here, oh! foul reproach to human  
wit!

A Hobbes hath reasoned, and Spinoza  
writ!

Rank pride does much! and yet we  
justly cry,

Our greatest errors in our weakness lie.  
For thoughts unclothed by language are,  
at best,

Obscure; while grossness injures those  
express

Through words, in whose analysis we find  
Th' analogies of Matter, not of Mind:

Hence, when the use of words is graceful  
brought,

As physical dress to metaphysic thought,  
The thought, howe'er sublime its pristine  
state,

Is by th' expression made degenerate;  
Its spiritual essence changed, or cramped;  
and hence

Some hold by words who cannot hold  
by sense,

And leave the thought behind, and take  
th' attire—  
Elijah's mantle, but without his fire !  
Yet spurn not words ! 'tis needful to  
confess  
They give ideas a body and a dress !  
Behold them traverse Learning's region  
round,  
The vehicles of thought on wheels of  
sound ;  
Mind's winged strength, wherewith the  
height is won,  
Unless she trust their frailty to the sun.  
Destroy the body !—will the spirit stay ?  
Destroy the car !—will Thought pursue  
her way ?  
Destroy the wings !—let Mind their aid  
forgo !  
Do no Icarian billows yawn below ?  
Ah ! spurn not words with reckless inso-  
lence ;  
But still admit their influence with the  
sense.  
And fear to slight their laws ! Perchance  
we find  
No perfect code transmitted to mankind ;  
And yet mankind, till life's dark sands  
are run,  
Prefers imperfect government to none.  
Thus Thought must bend to words !—  
Some sphere of bliss  
Ere long shall free her from th' alloy of  
this :  
Some kindred home for Mind—some  
holy place  
Where spirits look on spirits, 'face to  
face,'—  
Where souls may see as they themselves  
are seen,  
And voiceless intercourse may pass  
between,  
All pure—all free ! as light, which doth  
appear  
In its own essence incorrupt and clear !  
One service, praise ! one age, eternal  
youth !  
One tongue, intelligence ! one subject,  
truth !  
Till then, no freedom Learning's search  
affords  
Of soul from body, or of thought from  
words.

For thought may lose, in struggling to  
be hence,  
The gravitating power of common sense ;  
Through all the depths of space with  
Phaethon hurled,  
T' impair our reason, as he scorched our  
world.  
Hence this preceptive truth my page  
affirms—  
Respect the technicality of terms !  
Yet not in base submission, lest we find  
That, aiding clay, we crouch too low for  
Mind ;  
Too apt conception's essence to forget,  
And place all wisdom in the alphabet.  
Still let appropriate phrase the sense  
invest ;  
That what is well conceived be well  
expressed !  
Nor e'er the reader's wearied brain en-  
gage  
In hunting meaning down the mazy page,  
With three long periods tortured into one,  
The sentence ended, with the sense  
begun ;  
Nor in details, which schoolboys know  
by heart,  
Perplex each turning with the terms of art.  
To understand, we deem no common  
good ;  
And 'tis less easy to be *understood*.  
But let not clearness be your only praise,  
When style may charm a thousand differ-  
ent ways ;  
In Plato glow, to life and glory wrought,  
By high companionship with noblest  
thought ;  
In Bacon, warm abstraction with a breath,  
Catch Poesy's bright beams, and smile  
beneath ;  
In St. John roll, a generous stream, along,  
Correctly free and regularly strong.  
Nor scornful deem the effort out of place  
With taste to reason, and convince with  
grace ;  
But ponder wisely, ere you know, too  
late,  
Contempt of trifles will not prove us  
great !  
The Cynics, not their tubs, respect en-  
gage ;  
And dirty tunic never made a sage.

E'en Cato had he owned the Senate's will,  
And washed his toga, had been Cato still.

Justly we censure, yet are free to own  
That indecision is a crime unknown.  
For, never faltering, seldom reasoning long,

And still most positive whene'er most wrong,

No theoretic sage is apt to fare  
Like Mah'met's coffin—hung in middle air!

No! fenced by Error's all-sufficient trust,  
These stalk 'in nubibus'—those crawl in dust.

From their proud height, the first demand to know

If spiritual essence should descend more low?

The last, as vainly, from their dunghill cry,  
Can body's grossness hope t' aspire more high?

And while Reflection's empire these disclose,

Sensation's sovereign right is told by those.

Lo! Berkeley proves an old hypothesis!  
'Out on the senses!' (he was out of his!)

'All is idea, and nothing real springs  
But God and Reason!'—(not the right of kings?)

'Hold!' says Condillac, with profound surprise—

'Why prate of Reason! we have ears and eyes!'

Condillac! while the dangerous periods fall

Upon thy page, to stamp sensation *all*;  
While (coldly studious!) thine ingenious scroll

Endows the mimic statue with a soul  
Composed of sense—behold the generous hound—

His piercing eye, his ear awake to sound,  
His scent, most delicate organ! and declare

What triumph hath the 'Art of thinking' there!

What Gall, or Spurzheim, on his front hath sought

The mystic bumps indicative of Thought!

Or why, if Thought *do* there maintain  
her throne,  
Will reasoning curs leave logic for a bone?

Mind is imprisoned in a lonesome tower:  
Sensation is its window—hence herb,  
flower,

Landscapes all sun, the rush of thousand springs,

Waft in sweet scents, fair sights, soft murmurings;

And in her joy she gazeth—yet ere long  
Reason awaketh in her, bold and strong,  
And o'er the scene exerting secret laws,  
First seeks th' efficient, then the final cause,

Abstracts from forms their hidden accidents,

And marks in outward substance inward sense.

Our first perceptions formed, we search, to find

The operations of the forming mind;  
And turn within by Reason's certain route,

To view the shadows of the things without,

Discerned, retained, compared, combined, and brought

To mere abstraction by abstracting Thought.

Hence to discern, retain, compare, connect,

We deem the faculties of Intellect;

The which, mused on, exert a new control,  
And fresh ideas are opened on the soul.

Sensation is a stream with dashing spray  
That shoots in idle speed its arrowy way;

When lo! the mill arrests its waters' course,

Turning to use their unproductive force:  
The cunning wheels by foamy currents sped,

Reflection triumphs,—and mankind is fed!

Since Pope hath shown, and Learning still must show,

'We cannot reason but from what we know,'

Unfold the scroll of Thought and turn  
to find

The undeceiving signature of Mind !  
There judge her nature by her nature's  
course,

And trace her actions upwards to their  
source.

So when the property of Mind we call  
An essence or a substance spiritual,  
We name her thus by marking how she  
clings

Less to the forms than essences of things ;  
For body clings to body—objects seen  
And substance sensible alone have been  
Sensation's study ; while reflective Mind  
Essence unseen in objects seen may find,  
And, tracing whence her known impres-  
sions came,

Give single forms an universal name.

So when particular sounds in concord  
rise,

Those sounds as *melody* we generalize ;  
When pleasing shapes and colours blend,  
the soul

Abstracts th'idea of *beauty* from the whole,  
Deducting thus, by Mind's enchanting  
spell,

The intellectual from the sensible.

Hence bold Longinus' splendid periods  
grew,

'Who was himself the great sublime he  
drew' :

Hence Burke, the poet-reasoner, learned  
to trace

His glowing style of energetic grace :

Hence thoughts, perchance, some  
favoured bosoms move.

Which Price might own, and classic  
Knight approve !

Go ! light a rushlight ere the day is done  
And call its glimm'ring brighter than  
the sun !

Go ! while the stars in midnight glory  
beam,

Prefer their cold reflection in the stream !  
But be not that dull slave who only looks  
On Reason 'through the spectacles of  
books' !

Rather by Truth determine what is true,  
And reasoning works through Reason's  
medium view ;

For authors can't monopolize her light :  
'Tis yours to read as well as theirs to  
write.

To judge is yours !—then why submissive  
call

'The master said so' !—'tis no rule at  
all !

Shall passive sufferance e'en to mind  
belong

When right divine in man is human  
wrong ?

Shall a high name a low idea enhance  
When all may fail, as some succeed—by  
chance ?

Shall fixed chimeras unfixed reason  
shock ?

And if Locke err, must thousands err  
with Locke ?

Men ! claim your charter ! spurn th' unjust  
control,

And shake the bondage from the free-  
born soul !

Go walk the porticoes ! and teach your  
youth

All names are bubbles, but the name of  
Truth !

If fools by chance attend to Wisdom's  
rules,

'Tis no dishonour to be right with fools ;  
If human faults to Plato's page belong,

Not even with Plato willingly go wrong.  
But though the judging page declare it  
well

To love Truth better than the lips which  
tell,

Yet 'twere an error, with injustice classed,  
T'adore the former and neglect the last.

Oh ! beats there, Heaven ! a heart of  
human frame,

Whose pulses throb not at some kindling  
name ?

Some sound which brings high musings  
in its track,

Or calls perchance the days of childhood  
back

In its dear echo, when, without a sigh,  
Swift hoop and bounding ball were first

laid by,  
To clasp in joy, from schoolroom tyrant  
free,

The classic volume on the little knee,  
And con sweet sounds of dearest min-  
strelsy,

Or words of sterner lore ; the young  
 brow, fraught  
 With a calm brightness which might  
 mimic thought,  
 Leant on the boyish hand—as, all the  
 while,  
 A half-heaved sigh, or ay th' unconscious  
 smile,  
 Would tell how o'er that page the soul  
 was glowing  
 In an internal transport, past the know-  
 ing !  
 How feelings, erst unfelt, did then ap-  
 pear,  
 Give forth a voice, and murmur, 'We  
 are here !'  
 As lute-strings which a strong hand  
 plays upon,  
 Or Memnon's statue singing 'neath the  
 sun.  
 Ah me ! for such are pleasant memories,  
 And call the tears of fondness to our  
 eyes  
 Reposing on this gone-by dream, when  
 thus  
 One marbled book was all the world to  
 us,  
 The gentlest bliss our innocent thoughts  
 could find—  
 The happiest cradle of our infant mind !  
 And though such hours be past we shall  
 not less  
 Think on their joy with grateful tender-  
 ness,  
 And bless the page which bade our reason  
 wake,  
 And love the prophet for his mission's  
 sake.  
 But not alone doth Memory's smoulder-  
 ing flame  
 Reflect a radiance on a glorious name ;  
 For there are names of pride ; and they  
 who bear  
 Have walked with Truth, and turned their  
 footsteps where  
 We walk not—their beholdings ay have  
 been  
 O'er Mind's far countries which we have  
 not seen.  
 Our thoughts are not their thoughts !  
 and oft we dream  
 That light upon the awful brow doth  
 gleam,

From that high converse ; as  
 trod  
 Towards the people from  
 God  
 His lips were silent, but his  
 bright,  
 And prostrate Israel trembled at the sight.  
 What tongue can syllable our Bacon's  
 name,  
 Nor own a heart exulting in his fame !  
 Where prejudice' wild blasts were wont  
 to blow,  
 And waves of ignorance rolled dark  
 below,  
 He raised his sail and left the coast  
 behind—  
 Sublime Columbus of the realms of Mind !  
 Dared folly's mists, opinion's treacherous  
 sands,  
 And walked, with godlike step, th' un-  
 trodden lands !  
 But ah ! our Muse of Britain, standing  
 near,  
 Hath dimmed my tablet with a pensive  
 tear !  
 Thrice the proud theme her free-born  
 voice essays,  
 And thrice that voice is faltering in his  
 praise—  
 Yea ! till her eyes in silent triumph turn  
 To mark afar her Locke's sepulchral urn !  
 O urn ! where students rapturous vigils  
 keep,  
 Where sages envy, and where patriots  
 weep !  
 O name ! that bids my glowing spirit  
 wake—  
 To freemen's hearts endeared for Free-  
 dom's sake !  
 O soul ! too bright in life's corrupting hour  
 To rise by faction or to crouch to power !  
 While radiant Genius lifts her heaven-  
 ward wing,  
 And human bosoms own the Mind I sing ;  
 While British writers British thoughts  
 record,  
 And England's press is fearless as her  
 sword ;  
 While 'mid the seas which gird our  
 favoured isle  
 She clasps her chartered rights with  
 conscious smile—

So long be *thou* her glory and her guide,  
Thy page her study and thy name her  
pride!

Oh! ever thus, immortal Locke, belong  
First to my heart, as noblest in my song;  
And since in thee the Muse enraptured  
find

A moral greatness and creating mind,  
Still may thine influence, which with  
honoured light

Beams when I read, illumine me as I write!

The page too guiltless, and the soul too  
free,

To call a frown from Truth, or blush  
from thee!

But where Philosophy would fear to soar,  
Young Poesy's elastic steps explore!

Her fairy foot, her daring eye pursues  
The light of faith—nor trembles as she  
views!

Wont o'er the Psalmist's holy harp to  
hang,

And swell the sacred note which Milton  
sang;

Mingling reflection's chords with fancy's  
lays,

The tones of music with the voice of  
praise!

And while Philosophy, in spirit free,  
Reasons, believes, yet cannot plainly *see*,  
Poetic Rapture to her dazzled sight  
Portrays the shadows of the things of  
light;

Delighting o'er the unseen world to roam,  
And waft the pictures of perfection home.  
Thus Reason oft the aid of fancy seeks,  
And strikes Pierian chords—when Irving  
speaks!

Oh! silent be the withering tongue of  
those

Who call each page bereft of measure,  
prose;

Who deem the Muse possessed of such  
faint spells

That, like poor fools, she glories in her  
*bells*;

Who hear her voice alone in tinkling  
chime,

And find a line's whole magic in its rime;  
Forgetting, if the gilded shrine be fair,  
What purer spirit may inhabit there!

For such, indignant at her questioned  
might,

Let Genius cease to charm—and Scott  
to write!

Ungrateful Plato! o'er thy cradled rest  
The Muse hath hung, and all her love  
express;

Thy first imperfect accents fondly taught,  
And warmed thy visions with poetic  
thought!

Ungrateful Plato! should her deadliest  
foe

Be found within the breast she tended so?  
Spoiled of her laurels, should she weep  
to find

The best beloved become the most un-  
kind!

And was it well or generous, Brutus-like,  
To pierce the hand that gave the power  
to strike?

Sages by reason reason's powers direct;  
Bards through the heart convince the  
intellect:

Philosophy majestic brings to view  
Mind's perfect modes, and fair proportions  
too;

Enchanting Poesy bestows the while,  
Upon its sculptured grace, her magic  
smile,

Bids the cold form with living radiance  
glow,

And stamps existence on its marble brow!  
For Poesy's whole essence, when defined,  
Is elevation of the reasoning mind,

When inward sense from Fancy's page  
is taught,

And moral feeling ministers to Thought.  
And hence the natural passions all agree  
In seeking Nature's language—poetry.  
When Hope, in soft perspective, from afar  
Sees lovely scenes more lovely than they  
are,

To deck the landscape tiptoe Fancy brings  
Her plastic shapes and bright imaginings;  
Or when man's breast by torturing pangs  
is stung,

If fearful silence cease t' enchain his  
tongue,

In metaphor the feelings seek relief,  
And all the soul grows eloquent with  
grief.

Poetic fire, like Vesta's, pure and bright,  
Should draw from Nature's sun its holy  
light.

With Nature should the musing poet  
roam,

And steal instruction from her classic  
tome ;

When 'neath her guidance, least inclined  
to err—

The ablest painter when he copies *her*.

Belovèd Shakespeare! England's dearest  
fame !

Dead is the breast that swells not at thy  
name !

Whether thine Ariel skim the seas along,  
Floating on wings ethereal as his song—

Lear rave amid the tempest—or Macbeth  
Question the hags of hell on midnight  
heath—

Immortal Shakespeare! still thy lips  
impart

The noblest comment on the human  
heart.

And as fair Eve, in Eden newly placed,  
Gazed on her form, in limpid waters  
traced,

And stretched her gentle arms, with  
pleased surprise,

To meet the image of her own bright  
eyes—

So Nature on thy magic page surveys  
Her sportive graces and untutored ways!

Wondering, the soft reflection doth she  
see,

Then laughing owns she loves herself  
in thee !

Shun not the haunts of crowded cities,  
then ;

Nor e'er, as man, forget to study men !  
What though the tumult of the town  
intrude

On the deep silence and the lofty mood ;  
'Twill makethy human sympathies rejoice

To hear the music of a human voice,  
To watch strange brows by various  
reason wrought,

To claim the interchange of thought with  
thought,

'T associate mind with mind, for Mind's  
own weal,

As steel is ever sharpened best by steel.

T' impassioned bards the scenic world is  
dear—

But Nature's glorious masterpiece is  
here !

All poetry is beauty, but exprest  
In inward essence, not in outward vest.

Hence lovely scenes, reflective poets  
find,

Awake their lovelier images in Mind :  
Nor doth the pictured earth the bard  
invite,

The lake of azure or the heaven of light,  
But that his swelling breast arouses there

Something less visible, and much more  
fair !

There is a music in the landscape round —  
A silent voice, that speaks without a  
sound—

A witching spirit, that, reposing near,  
Breathes to the heart, but comes not to  
the ear !

These softly steal, his kindling soul t'  
embrace,

And natural beauty gild with moral  
grace.

Think not, when summer breezes tell  
their tale,

The poet's thoughts are with the summer  
gale ;

Think not his Fancy builds her elfin  
dream

On painted floweret, or on sighing  
stream :

No single objects cause his raptured  
starts,

For Mind is narrowed, not inspired, by  
parts.

But o'er the scene the poet's spirit broods,  
To warm the thoughts that form his  
noblest moods,

Peopling his solitude with faëry play,  
And beckoning shapes that whisper him  
away,

While lilled fields, and hedgerow blos-  
soms white,

And hills, and glittering streams, are full  
in sight—

The forests wave, the joyous sun be-  
guiles,

And all the poetry of Nature smiles !

Such poetry is formed by Mind, and not  
By scenic grace of one peculiar spot.

The artist lingers in the moonlit glade,  
And light and shade, with him, are—light  
and shade ;

The philosophic chemist wandering there  
Dreams of the soil and nature of the air ;  
The rustic marks the young herbs' fresh'n-  
ing hue,

And only thinks—his scythe may soon  
pass through !

None 'muse on nature with a Poet's eye,'  
None read, but Poets, Nature's poetry !  
Its characters are traced in mystic hand,  
And all may gaze, but few can understand.

Nor here alone the Poet's dwelling rear,  
Though Beauty's voice perchance is  
sweetest here !

Bind not his footsteps to the sylvan scene,  
To heathy banks, fair woods, and valleys  
green,

When Mind is all his own ! Her dear  
impress

Shall throw a magic o'er the wilderness  
As o'er the blossoming vale, and ay recall  
Its shadowy plane and silver waterfall,  
Or sleepy crystal pool, reposing by,  
To give the earth a picture of the sky !  
Such, gazed on by the spirit, are, I ween,  
Lovelier than ever prototype was seen ;  
For Fancy teacheth Memory's hand to  
trace

Nature's ideal form in Nature's place.  
In every theme by lofty Poet sung  
The thought should seem to speak, and  
not the tongue.

When godlike Milton lifts th' exalted  
song

The subject bears the burning words  
along—

Resounds the march of Thought, th'  
o'erflowing line,

Full cadence, solemn pause, and strength  
divine !

When Horace chats his neighbour's  
faults away

The sportive measures, like his muse,  
are gay ;

For once Good-humour Satire's byway  
took,

And all his soul is laughing in his book !  
On moral Pope's didactic page is found  
Sound ruled by sense, and sense made  
clear by sound,

The power to reason and the taste to  
please,

While, as the subject varies in degrees,  
He stoops with dignity and soars with  
ease.

Hence let our Poets, with discerning  
glance,

Forbear to imitate the stage of France.  
What though Corneille arouse the thrill-  
ing chords,

And walk with Genius o'er th' inspired  
boards ;

What though his rival bring, with calmer  
grace,

The classic unities of time and place—  
All polish and all eloquence—'twere  
mean

To leave the path of Nature for Racine ;  
When Nero's parent, 'midst her woe,  
defines

The wrong that tortures—in two hundred  
lines :

Or when Orestes, maddened by his  
crime,

Forgets life, joy, and everything—but  
rime.

While thus to character and nature true,  
Still keep the harmony of verse in view ;  
Yet not in changeless concord,—it  
should be,

Though graceful, nervous,—musical,  
though free ;

Not clogged by useless drapery, not beset  
By the superfluous word or epithet,

Wherein Conception only dies in state,  
As Draco smothered by the garments'

weight—

But join, Amphion-like (whose magic  
fire

Won the deep music of the Maian lyre,  
To call Boeotia's city from the ground),  
The just in structure with the sweet in  
sound.

Nor this the whole—the poet's classic  
strain

May flow in smoothest numbers, yet in  
vain ;

And Taste may please, and Fancy sport  
awhile,

And yet Aonia's muse refuse to smile !

For lo! her heavenly lips these words  
reveal—

'The sage may coldly *think*, the bard  
must *feel*!

And if his writings, to his heart untrue,  
Would ape the fervent throb it never  
knew;

If generous deeds, and Virtue's noblest  
part,

And Freedom's voice, could never warm  
that heart;

If Interestaxed the produce of the brain,  
And fettered Genius followed in her  
train,

Weeping as each unwilling word she  
spoke—

Then hush the lute—its master-string is  
broke!

In vain the skilful hand may linger o'er—  
Concord is dead, and music speaks no  
more!'

There are, and have been such—they  
were forgot

If shame could veil their page, if tears  
could blot!

There are, and have been, whose dis-  
honoured lay

Aspired t' enrapture that the world  
might—pay!

Whose life was one long bribe, oft  
counted o'er—

Bribed to think on, and bribed to think  
no more;

Bribed to laugh, weep, nor ask the reason  
why;

Bribed to tell truth, and bribed to gild a  
lie!

O Man! for this, the sensual left behind,  
We boast our empire o'er the vast of *Mind*!

O Mind! reported valueless till sold,  
Thought dross till metamorphosed into  
gold

By Midas' touch—breath'st thou im-  
mortal verse

To throw a ducat in an empty purse—  
To walk the market at a bellman's cry

For knaves to sell and wondering fools  
to buy?

Can Heaven-born bards, undone by  
lucre's lust,

Crouch thus, like Heaven-born ministers,  
to dust?

Alas! to dust indeed—yet wherefore  
blame?

They keep their profits though they lose  
their fame.

Leave to the dross they seek the grovel-  
ling throng,

And swell with nobler aim th' Aonian  
song!

Enough for thee, uninfluenced and un-  
hired,

If Truth reward the strain herself in-  
spired!

Enough for thee if grateful Man commend,  
If Genius love, and Virtue call thee friend!

Enough for thee to wake th' exalted  
mood,

Reprove the erring, and confirm the good;  
Excite the tender smile, the generous tear,

Or rouse the thought to loftiest Nature  
dear,

Which rapturous greets amidst the fer-  
vent line

Thy name, O Freedom! glorious Hellas,  
thine!

I love my own dear land—it doth rejoice  
The soul to stretch my arms and lift my

voice,  
To tell her of my love! I love her green

And bowery woods, her hills in mossy  
sheen,

Her silver running waters—there's no  
spot

In all her dwelling which my breast loves  
not—

No place not heart-enchanted! Sunnier  
skies

And calmer waves may meet another's  
eyes;

I love the sullen mist, the stormy sea,  
The winds of rushing strength which,

like the land, are free!

Such is my love—yet, turning thus to  
thee,

O Graecia! I must hail with hardly less  
Of joy, and pride, and deepening tender-  
ness,

And feelings wild I know not to control,  
My other country—country of my soul!

For so, to me, thou art! my lips have sung  
Of thee with childhood's lip, and harp

unstrung!

In thee, my Fancy's pleasant walks have  
been,  
Telling her tales, while Memory wept  
between!  
And now for thee I joy, with heart be-  
guiled,  
As if a dying friend looked up and smiled.

Lo! o'er Aegaea's waves the shout hath  
risen!

Lo! Hope hath burst the fetters of her  
prison!

And Glory sounds the trump along the  
shore,

And Freedom walks where Freedom  
walked before!

Ipsara glimmers with heroic light,  
Redd'ning the waves that lash her flaming  
height;

And Aegypt hurries from that dark blue  
sea!

Lo! o'er the cliffs of famed Thermopylae  
And voiceful Marathon the wild winds  
sweep,

Bearing this message to the brave who  
sleep—

'They come! they come! with their  
embattled shock,

From Pelion's steep and Paros' foam-  
dashed rock!

They come from Tempe's vale and  
Helicon's spring,

And proud Eurotas' banks, the river king!  
They come from Leuctra, from the waves  
that kiss

Athena—from the shores of Salamis;  
From Sparta, Thebes, Euboea's hills of  
blue—

To live with Hellas—or to sleep with  
you!

Smile—smile, beloved land! and though  
no lay

From Doric pipe may charm thy glades  
to-day—

Though dear Ionic music murmur not  
Adown the vale, its echo all forgot!—

Yet smile, beloved land! for soon, around,  
Thy silent earth shall utter forth a sound  
As whilom; and, its pleasant groves  
among,

The Grecian voice shall breathe the  
Grecian song,

While the exiled muse shall 'habit still  
The happy haunts of her Parnassian hill.  
Till then, behold the cold, dumb sepul-  
chre—

The ruined column—ocean, earth, and  
air,

Man and his wrongs!—thou hast Tyrtacus  
there!

And pardon, if across the heaving main  
Sound the far melody of minstrel strain

In wild and fitful gust from England's  
shore,

For his immortal sake, who never more  
Shall tread with living foot, and spirit  
free,

Her fields, or breathe her passionate  
poetry—

The pilgrim bard, who lived and died  
for thee,

O land of Memory! loving thee no less  
Than parent—with the filial tenderness

And holy ardour of the Argive son,  
Straining each nerve to bear thy chariot  
on—

Till when its wheels the place of glory  
swept

He laid him down before the shrine—  
and slept.

So be it! at his cold, unconscious bier  
We fondly sate, and dropped the natural  
tear—

Yet wept not wisely, for he sank to rest  
On the dear earth his waking thoughts  
loved best,

And gently life's last pulses stole away!  
No Moschus sang a requiem o'er his clay,  
But Greece was sad! and breathed above,  
below,

The warrior's sigh, the silence, and the  
woe!

And is this all? Is this the little sum  
For which we toil—to which our glories  
come?

Doth History bend her mouldering pages  
o'er,

And Science stretch her bulwark from  
the shore,

And Sages search the mystic paths of  
Thought,

And Poets charm with lays that Genius  
taught—

For this? to labour through their little  
day,  
To weep an hour, then want the tear  
they pay—  
To ask the urn, their death and life to  
tell,  
When the dull dust would give that tale  
as well!

Man! hast thou seen the gallant vessel  
sweep,  
Borrowing her moonlight from the  
jealous deep,  
And gliding with mute foot and silver  
wing  
Over the waters like a soul-moved thing?  
Man, hast thou gazed on this—then  
looked again,  
And seen no speck on all that desolate  
main,  
And heard no sound—except the gurgling  
cry,  
The winds half stifled in their mockery?

Woe unto thee! for thus thy course is  
run,  
And in the fullness of thy noonday sun  
The darkness cometh—yea! thou walk'st  
abroad  
In glory, Child of Mind, Creation's Lord—  
And wisdom's music from thy lips hath  
gushed!

Then comes the *Selah*! and the voice is  
hushed,  
And the light past! we seek where thou  
hast been

In beauty—but thy beauty is not seen!  
We breathe the air thou breath'dst, we  
tread the spot  
Thy feet were wont to tread, but find thee  
not!

Beyond, sits Darkness with her haggard  
face,  
Brooding fiend-like above thy burying-  
place—

Beneath, let wildest Fancy take her fill!  
Shall we seek on? we shudder, and are  
still!

Yet woe not unto thee, thou child of  
Earth!

Though moonlight sleep on thy deserted  
hearth

We will not cry 'alas!' above thy clay!  
It was, perchance, thy joyous pride to  
stray

On Mind's lone shore, and linger by the  
way:

But now thy pilgrim's staff is laid aside,  
And on thou journeyest o'er the sullen  
tide,

To bless thy wearied sight, and glad  
thine heart

With all that Mind's serenest skies impart;  
Where Wisdom suns the day no shades  
destroy,

And Learning ends in Truth, as hope in  
joy:

While *we* stand mournful on the desert  
beach,

And wait, and wish, thy distant bark to  
reach,

And weep to watch it passing from our  
sight,

And sound the gun's salute, and sigh our  
last 'good night!'

And oh! while thus the spirit glides  
away,

Give to the world its memory with its clay!  
Some page our country's grateful eyes  
may scan;

Some useful truth to bless surviving man;  
Some name to honest bosoms justly dear;

Some grave t' exalt the thought and  
claim the tear;

So when the pilgrim Sun is travelling o'er  
The last blue hill, to gild a distant shore,

He leaves a freshness in the evening scene  
That tells Creation where his steps have  
been!

## SHORTER POEMS

APPENDED TO 'AN ESSAY ON MIND' AND THE FIRST VERSION  
OF 'PROMETHEUS BOUND,' 1833

### TO MY FATHER ON HIS BIRTH- DAY

*Causa fuit Pater his.*—HORACE.

AMIDST the days of pleasant mirth,  
That throw their halo round our earth;  
Amidst the tender thoughts that rise  
To call bright tears to happy eyes;  
Amidst the silken words that move  
To syllable the names we love;  
There glides no day of gentle bliss  
More soothing to the heart than *this*!  
No thoughts of fondness e'er appear  
*More* fond, than those I write of here!  
No name can e'er on tablet shine,  
My Father! more beloved than *thine*!

'Tis sweet, adown the shady past,  
A lingering look of love to cast—  
Back th' enchanted world to call,  
That beamed around us first of all;  
And walk with Memory fondly o'er  
The paths where Hope had been before—  
Sweet to receive the sylphic sound  
That breathes in tenderness around,  
Repeating to the listening ear  
The names that made our childhood  
dear—

For parted Joy, like Echo, kind,  
Will leave her dulcet voice behind,  
To tell, amidst the magic air,  
How oft she smiled and lingered there.  
Oh! let the deep Aonian shell  
Breathe tuneful numbers, clear and well,  
While the glad Hours, in fair array,  
Lead on this buxom Holiday,  
And Time, as on his way he springs,  
Hates the last bard who gave him wings;  
For 'neath thy gentleness of praise,  
My Father! rose my early lays!  
And when the lyre was scarce awake,  
I loved its strings for *thy* loved sake;  
Wooed the kind Muses—but the while  
Thought only how to win thy smile—

My proudest fame—my dearest pride—  
*More* dear than all the world beside!  
And now, perchance, I seek the tone  
For magic that is more its own;  
But still my Father's looks remain  
The best Maccenas of my strain;  
My gentlest joy, upon his brow  
To read the smile, that meets me now—  
To hear him, in his kindness, say  
The words,—perchance he'll speak to-  
day!

### SPENSERIAN STANZAS ON A BOY OF THREE YEARS OLD

CHILD of the sunny lockes and beautifull  
brow!  
In thoughtfull tenderness I gaze on  
thee—  
Upon thy daintie cheek Expression's  
glov  
Daunceth in tyme to thine heart's  
melodie;  
Ne mortall wight mote lovelier urchin  
see!  
Nathlesse it teens this pensive brest of  
mine  
To think—belive the innocent revelrie  
Shall be eclipsed in those soft blue  
eyne—  
Whenso the howre of youth no more for  
thee shall shine.

Ah me! eftsoons thy childhood's  
pleasaunt dais  
Shall fly away, and be a whilome thing!  
And sweetest mearinake, and birthday  
lais  
Be recked not of, except when memo-  
ries bring  
Feres to their embers with awaking  
wing,

To make past love rejoyce thy tender  
 sprite,  
 Albeit the toyles of daunger thee en-  
 ring!  
 Child of the wavy lockes and brow of  
 light—  
*Then* be thy conscience pure, as *now* thy  
 face is bright.

### VERSES TO MY BROTHER

For we were nursed upon the self-same hill.  
*Lycidas.*

I WILL write down thy name, and  
 when 'tis writ,  
 Will turn me from the hum that mortals  
 keep  
 In the wide world without, and gaze  
 on it!  
 It telleth of the past—calling from sleep  
 Such dear, yet mournful thoughts, as  
 make us smile, and weep.

Beloved and best! what thousand  
 feelings start,  
 As o'er the paper's course my fingers  
 move—  
 My Brother! dearest, kindest as thou  
 art!  
 How can these lips my heart's affection  
 prove?  
 I could not speak the words, if words  
 could speak my love.

Together have we passed our infant  
 hours,  
 Together sported Childhood's spring  
 away,  
 Together called young Hope's fast  
 budding flowers,  
 To wreath the forehead of each  
 coming day!  
 Yes! for the present's sun makes e'en  
 the future gay.

And when the laughing mood was  
 nearly o'er,  
 Together, many a minute did we wile  
 On Horace' page, or Maro's sweeter  
 lore;

While one young critic, on the classic  
 style,  
 Would sagely try to frown, and make  
 the other smile.

But now alone thou con'st the ancient  
 to me—  
 And sometimes thy dear studies, it  
 may be,  
 Are crossed by dearer dreams of me  
 and home!  
 Alone I muse on Homer—thoughts  
 are free—  
 And if mine often stray, they go in  
 search of thee!

I may not praise thee *here*—I will not  
 bless!  
 Yet all thy goodness doth my memory  
 bear,  
 Cherished by more than Friendship's  
 tenderness—  
 And, in the silence of my evening  
 prayer,  
 Thou shalt not be forgot—thy dear name  
 shall be there!

### STANZAS ON THE DEATH OF LORD BYRON

λέγε πασιν ἀπόλοτο.—BION.

I am not now  
 That which I have been.—*Childie Harold.*

HE *was*, and is not! Graecia's trembling  
 shore,  
 Sighing through all her palmy groves,  
 shall tell  
 That Harold's pilgrimage at last is  
 o'er—  
 Mute the impassioned tongue, and  
 tuneful shell,  
 That erst was wont in noblest strains  
 to swell—  
 Hushed the proud shouts that rode  
 Aegaea's wave!  
 For lo! the great Deliv'rer breathes  
 farewell!  
 Gives to the world his mem'ry and a  
 grave—  
 Expiring in the land he only lived to save!

Mourn, Hellas, mourn! and o'er thy  
widowed brow,  
For ay, the cypress wreath of sorrow  
twine;  
And in thy new-formed beauty, 'deso-  
late, throw  
The fresh-culled flowers on *his* sepul-  
chral shrine.  
Yes! let that heart whose fervour was  
all thine,  
In consecrated urn lamented be!  
That generous heart where genius  
thrilled divine,  
Hath spent its last most glorious throb  
for thee—  
Then sank amid the storm that made thy  
children free!

Britannia's poet! Graecia's hero,  
sleeps!  
And Freedom, bending o'er the breath-  
less clay,  
Lifts up her voice, and in her anguish  
weeps!  
For us, a night hath clouded o'er our  
day,  
And hushed the lips that breathed our  
fairest lay.  
Alas! and must the British lyre resound  
A requiem, while the spirit wings away  
Of him who on its strings such music  
found,  
And taught its startling chords to give so  
sweet a sound!

The theme grows sadder—but my soul  
shall find  
A language in these tears! No more—  
no more!  
Soon, 'midst the shriekings of the  
tossing wind,  
The 'dark blue depths' he sang of,  
shall have bore  
Our *all* of Byron to his native shore!  
His grave is thick with voices—to the  
ear  
Murm'ring an awful tale of greatness  
o'er;  
But Memory strives with Death, and  
lingering near,  
Shall consecrate the dust of Harold's  
lonely bier!

## MEMORY

My Fancy's steps have often strayed  
To some fair vale the hills have made;  
Where sparkling waters travel o'er,  
And hold a mirror to the shore;  
Windings with murmurings in and out,  
To find the flowers which grow about.  
And there, perchance, in childhood bold,  
Some little elf, four summers old,  
Adown the vales may chance to run,  
To hunt his shadow in the sun!  
But when the waters meet his eyes,  
He starts and stops with glad surprise,  
And shouts, with merry voice, to view  
The banks of green, the skies of blue,  
Th' inverted flocks that bleating go,  
Lilies, and trees of apple-blow,  
Seeming so beautiful below!  
He peeps above—he glances round,  
And then looks down, and thinks he's  
found  
Reposing in the stream, to woo one,  
A world even lovelier than the true one.

Thus, with visions gay and light,  
Hath Fancy loved my page to dight;  
Yet Thought hath, through a vista, seen  
Something less frivolous, I ween:  
Then, while my chatting pen runs on,  
I'll tell you what she dreamt upon.

Memory's the streamlet of the scene,  
Which sweeps the hills of Life between;  
And, when our walking hour is past,  
Upon its shore we rest at last;  
And love to view the waters fair,  
And see lost joys depicted there.

My —, when thy feet are led  
To press those banks we all must tread,  
May Virtue's smile and Learning's praise  
Adorn the waters to thy gaze;  
And, o'er their lucid course, be lent  
The sunshine of a life well spent!  
Then, if a thought should glad thy breast  
Of those who loved thee first and best,  
My name, perchance, may haunt the  
spot,  
Not quite unprired—nor all forgot.

## TO —

MINE is a wayward lay;  
And, if its echoing rimes I try to  
string

Proveth a truant thing,  
Whenso some names I love, send it  
away!

For then, eyes swimming o'er,  
And claspèd hands, and smiles in fondness  
meant,  
Are much more eloquent —  
So it had fain begone, and speak no more!

Yet shall it come again,  
Ah, friend beloved! if so thy wishes be,  
And, with wild melody,  
I will, upon thine ear, cadence my  
strain—

Cadence my simple line,  
Unfashioned by the cunning hand of Art,  
But coming from my heart,  
To tell the message of its love to thine!

As ocean shells, when taken  
From Ocean's bed, will faithfully repeat  
Her ancient music sweet—  
Ev'n so these words, true to my heart,  
shall waken!

Oh! while our bark is seen,  
Our little bark of kindly, social love,  
Down life's clear stream to move  
Toward the summer shores, where al  
is green—

So long thy name shall bring  
Echoes of joy unto the grateful gales,  
And thousand tender tales,  
To freshen the fond hearts that round  
thee cling!

Hast thou not looked upon  
The flowerets of the field in lowly dress?  
Blame not my simpleness—  
Think only of my love!—my song is  
gone.

## STANZAS

OCCASIONED BY A PASSAGE IN  
MR. EMERSON'S JOURNAL

*Which states that, on the mention of Lord  
Byron's name, Captain Demetrius, an  
old Roundeliot, burst into tears*

NAME not his name, or look afar—  
For when my spirit hears  
That name, its strength is turned to  
woe—  
My voice is turned to tears.

Name me the host and battle-storm,  
Mine own good sword shall stem;  
Name me the foeman and the block,  
I have a smile for *them*!

But name *him* not, or cease to mark  
This brow where passions sweep—  
Behold, a warrior is a man,  
And as a man may weep!

I could not scorn my Country's foes,  
Did not these tears descend—  
I could not love my Country's fame,  
And not my Country's Friend.

Deem not his memory e'er can be  
Upon our spirits dim—  
Name us the generous and the free,  
And we must think of *him*!

For his voice resounded through our land  
Like the voice of liberty,  
As when the war-trump of the wind  
Upstirs our dark blue sea.

His arm was in the foremost rank,  
Where embattled thousands roll—  
His name was in the love of Greece,  
And his spell was on her soul!

But the arm that wielded her good sword,  
The brow that wore the wreath,  
The lips that breathed the deathless  
thoughts—  
They went asleep in death.

Ye left his HEART, when ye took away  
The dust in funeral state ;  
And we dumbly placed in a little urn  
That home of all things great.

The banner streamed—the war-shout  
rose—

Our heroes played their part ;  
But not a pulse would throb or burn—  
Oh ! could it be *his* heart !

I will not think—'tis worse than vain  
Upon such thoughts to keep ;  
Then, Briton, name me not his name—  
I cannot choose but weep !

### THE PAST

THERE is a silence upon the Ocean,  
Albeit it swells with a feverish motion ;  
Like to the battle-camp's fearful calm,  
While the banners are spread, and the  
warriors arm.

The winds beat not their drum to the  
waves,  
But sullenly moan in the distant caves ;  
Talking over, before they rise,  
Some of their dark conspiracies.

And so it is in this life of ours,  
A calm may be on the present hours,  
But the calmest hour of festive glee  
May turn the mother of woe to thee.

I will betake me to the Past,  
And she shall make my love at last ;  
I will find my home in her tarrying-  
place—  
I will gaze all day on her deathly face !

Her form, though awful, is fair to view ;  
The clasp of her hand, though cold, is  
true ;  
Her shadowy brow hath no changeful-  
ness,  
And her numbered smiles can grow no  
less !

Her voice is like a pleasant song,  
Which we have not heard for very long,  
And which a joy on our souls will cast,  
Though we know not where we heard  
it last.

She shall walk with me, away, away,  
Where'er the mighty have left their  
clay ;  
She shall speak to me in places lone,  
With a low and holy tone.

Aye ! when I have lit my lamp at night,  
She will be present with my sprite ;  
And I will say, whate'er it be,  
Every word she telleth me !

### THE PRAYER

METHOUGHT that I did stand upon a  
tomb—

And all was silent as the dust beneath,  
While feverish thoughts upon my soul  
would come,

Losing my words in tears : I thought  
of death ;

And prayed that when my lips gave  
out the breath,

The friends I loved like life might stay  
behind :

So, for a little while, my name might  
eath

Be something dear,—spoken with  
voices kind,

Heard with remembering looks, from  
eyes which tears would blind !

I prayed that I might sink unto my rest  
(O foolish, selfish prayer !) before  
them all ;

So I might look my last on those loved  
best—

So never would my voice repining call,  
And never would my tears impassioned  
fall

On one familiar face turning to clay !  
So would my tune of life be musical,

Albeit abrupt—like airs the Spaniards  
play,

Which in the sweetest part break off,  
and die away.

Methought I looked around ! the scene  
was rife

With little vales, green banks, and  
waters heaving ;

And every living thing did joy in life,

And every thing of beauty did seem  
 living—  
 Oh, then, life's pulse was at my heart  
 reviving;  
 And then I knew that it was good to bear  
 Dispensed woe, that by the spirit's  
 grieving  
 It might be weaned from a world so  
 fair!—  
 Thus with submissive words mine heart  
 did close its prayer.

### ON A PICTURE OF RIEGO'S WIDOW

PLACED IN AN EXHIBITION

DAUGHTER of Spain! a passer by  
 May mark the cheek serenely pale—  
 The dark eyes which dream silently,  
 And the calm lip which gives no wail!

Calm! it bears not a deeper trace  
 Of feelings it disdained to show;  
 We look upon the Widow's face,  
 And only read the Patriot's woe!

No word, no look, no sigh of thine,  
 Would make *his* glory seem more dim;  
 Thou wouldst not give to vulgar eye  
 The sacred tear which fell for *HIM*.

Thou wouldst not hold to the world's  
 view

Thy ruined joys, thy broken heart—  
 The jeering world—it only knew  
 Of all thine anguish—that thou *WERT*!

While o'er *his* grave thy steps would go  
 With a firm tread,—stilling thy love,—  
 As if the dust would blush below  
 To feel one faltering foot above.

For Spain, *he* dared the noble strife—  
 For Spain, he gave his latest breath;  
 And he who lived the Patriot's life  
 Was dragged to die the traitor's death!

And the shout of thousands swept around;  
 As he stood the traitor's block beside;  
 But his dying lips gave a free sound—  
 Let the foe weep!—thy brow had  
*pride!*

Yet haply in the midnight air,  
 When none might part thy God and  
 thee,  
 The lengthened sob, the passionate  
 prayer,  
 Have spoken thy soul's agony!

But silent else, thou passed away—  
 The plaint unbreathed, the anguish  
 hid—

More voiceless than the echoing clay  
 Which idly knocked thy coffin's lid.

Peace be to thee! while Britons seek  
 This place, if British souls they bear,  
 'Twill start the crimson in the cheek  
 To see Riego's widow *THERE!*

### SONG

WEEP, as if you thought of laughter!  
 Smile, as tears were coming after!  
 Marry your pleasures to your woes;  
 And think life's green well worth its  
 rose!

No sorrow will your heart betide,  
 Without a comfort by its side;  
 The sun may sleep in his sea-bed,  
 But you have starlight overhead.

Trust not to Joy! the rose of June,  
 When opened wide, will wither soon;  
 Italian days without twilight  
 Will turn them suddenly to night.

Joy, most changeful of all things,  
 Flits away on rainbow wings;  
 And when they look the gayest, know,  
 It is that they are spread to go!

### THE DREAM

A FRAGMENT

I HAD a dream!—my spirit was un-  
 bound  
 From the dark iron of its dungeon, clay,  
 And rode the steeds of Time;—my  
 thoughts had sound,  
 And spoke without a word,—I went  
 away  
 Among the buried ages, and did lay

The pulses of my heart beneath the  
touch  
Of the rude minstrel Time, that he  
should play  
Thereon a melody which might seem  
such  
As musing spirits love—mournful, but  
not too much!

I had a dream—and there mine eyes  
did see  
The shadows of past deeds like present  
things—  
The sepulchres of Greece and Hesper, yea,  
Aegyptus, and old lands, gave up their  
kings,  
Their prophets, saints, and minstrels,  
whose lute-strings  
Keep a long echo—yea, the dead,  
white bones  
Did stand up by the house whereto  
Death clings,  
And dressed themselves in life, speak-  
ing of thrones,  
And fame, and power, and beauty, in  
familiar tones!

I went back further still, for I beheld  
What time the earth was one fair  
Paradise—  
And over such bright meads the waters  
welled,  
I wot the rainbow was content to rise  
Upon the earth, when absent from the  
skies!  
And there were tall trees that I never  
knew,  
Whereon sate nameless birds in merry  
guise,  
Folding their radiant wings, as the  
flowers do,  
When summer nights send sleep down  
with the dew.

. . . . .  
Anon there came a change—a terrible  
motion,  
That made all living things grow pale  
and shake!  
The dark Heavens bowed themselves  
unto the ocean,  
Like a strong man in strife—Ocean  
did take

His flight across the mountains; and  
the lake  
Was lashed into a sea where the  
winds ride—  
Earth was no more, for in her merry-  
make  
She had forgot her God—Sin claimed  
his bride,  
And with his vampire breath sucked out  
her life's fair tide!

Life went back to her nostrils, and  
she raised  
Her spirit from the waters once  
again—  
The lovely sights, on which I erst had  
gazed,  
Were *not*—though she was beautiful  
as when  
The Grecian called her 'Beauty'—  
sinful men  
Walked i' the track of the waters, and  
felt bold—  
Yea, they looked up to Heaven in calm  
disdain,  
As if no eye had seen its vault unfold  
Darkness, and fear, and death!—as if a  
tale were told!

And ages fled away within my dream;  
And still Sin made the heart his  
dwelling-place,  
Eclipsing Heaven from men; but it  
would seem  
That two or three dared commune face  
to face,  
And speak of the soul's life, of hope,  
and grace.  
Anon there rose such sounds as angels  
breathe—  
For a God came to die, bringing down  
peace—  
'Pan was *not*'; and the darkness  
that did wreath  
The earth, passed from the soul—Life  
came by Death!

#### RIGA'S LAST SONG

I HAVE looked my last on my native land,  
And over these strings I throw my hand,  
To say in the death-hour's minstrelsy,  
Hellas, my country! farewell to thee!

I have looked my last on my native shore ;  
I shall tread my country's plains no more ;  
But my last thought is of her fame ;  
But my last breath speaketh her name !

And though these lips shall soon be still,  
They may now obey the spirit's will ;  
Though the dust be fettered, the spirit  
is free—

Hellas, my country ! farewell to thee !

I go to death—but I leave behind  
The stirrings of Freedom's mighty mind ;  
Her voice shall arise from plain to sky,  
Her steps shall tread where my ashes lie !

I looked on the mountains of proud Souli,  
And the mountains they seemed to look  
on me ;

I spoke my thought on Marathon's plain,  
And Marathon seemed to speak again !

And as I journeyed on my way,  
I saw an infant group at play ;  
One shouted aloud in his childish glee,  
And showed me the heights of Thermopylae !

I gazed on peasants hurrying by,—  
The dark Greek pride crouched in their  
eye ;

So I swear in my death-hour's minstrelsy,  
Hellas, my country ! thou *shalt* be free !

No more !—I dash my lyre on the  
ground—

I tear its strings from their home of  
sound—

For the music of slaves shall never keep  
Where the hand of a freeman was wont  
to sweep !

And I bend my brows above the block,  
Silently waiting the swift death shock ;  
For these lips shall speak what becomes  
the free—

Or—Hellas, my country ! farewell to  
thee !

He bowed his head with a Patriot's pride,  
And his dead trunk fell the mute lyre  
beside !

The soul of each had passed away—  
Soundless the strings—breathless the  
clay !

### THE VISION OF FAME

Did ye ever sit on summer noon,  
Half musing and half asleep,  
When ye smile in such a dreamy way,  
Ye know not if ye weep—

When the little flowers are thick beneath,  
And the welkin blue above ;  
When there is not a sound but the cattle's  
low,  
And the voice of the woodland dove ?

A while ago, and I dreamed thus—  
I mused on ancient story,—  
For the heart like a minstrel of old doth  
seem,  
It delighteth to sing of glory.

What time I saw before me stand  
A bright and lofty One ;  
A golden lute was in her hand,  
And her brow drooped thereon.

But the brow that drooped was raised  
soon,  
Showing its royal sheen—  
It was, I guessed, no human brow,  
Though pleasant to human e'en.

And this brow of peerless majesty  
With its whiteness did enshroud  
Two eyes that, darkly mystical,  
'Gan look up at a cloud.

Like to the hair of Berenice,  
Fetched from its house of light,  
Was the hair which wreathed her  
shadowless form—  
And Fame the ladye hight !

But as she wended on to me,  
My heart's deep fear was chidden ;  
For she called up the sprite of Melody,  
Which in her lute lay hid den.

When ye speak to well-belovèd ones,  
Your voice is tender and low :  
The wires methought did love her touch—  
For they did answer so.

And her lips in such a quiet way  
Gave the chant soft and long,—  
You might have thought she only  
breathed,  
And that her breath was song :—

'When Death shrouds thy memory,  
Love is no shrine—  
The dear eyes that weep for thee  
Soon sleep like thine !  
The wail murmured over thee  
Fainteth away ;  
And the heart which kept love for thee  
Turns into clay !

'But wouldst thou remembered be,  
Make me thy vow ;  
This verse that flows gushingly  
Telleth thee how—  
Linking thy hand in mine,  
Listen to me,  
So not a thought of thine  
Dieth with thee—

'Rifle thy pulsing heart  
Of the gift, love made ;  
Bid thine eye's light depart ;  
Let thy cheek fade !  
Give me the slumber deep,  
Which night-long seems ;  
Give me the joys that creep  
Into thy dreams !

'Give me thy youthful years,  
Merriest that fly—  
So the word, spoke in *tears*,  
Liveth for ay !  
So thy sepulchral stone,  
Nations may raise—  
What time thy soul hath known  
The *worth of praise* !'

She did not sing this chant to me,  
Though I was sitting by ;  
But I listened to it with chained breath,  
That had no power to sigh.

And ever as the chant went on  
Its measure changed to wail ;  
And ever as the lips sang on  
Her face did grow more pale.

Paler and paler—till anon  
A fear came o'er my soul ;  
For the flesh curled up from her bones,  
Like to a blasted scroll !

Aye ! silently it dropped away  
Before my wondering sight—  
There was only a bleached skeleton  
Where erst was ladye bright !

But still the vacant sockets gleamed  
With supernatural fires—  
But still the bony hands did ring  
Against the shuddering wires !

Alas, alas ! I wended home,  
With a sorrow and a shame—  
Is Fame the rest of our poor hearts !  
Woe's me ! for THIS IS FAME !

## THE TEMPEST

### A FRAGMENT

Mors erat ante oculos.—LUCAN, lib. ix.

THE forest made my home—the voiceful  
streams

My minstrel throng: the everlasting  
hills,—

Which marry with the firmament, and cry  
Unto the brazen thunder, 'Come away,  
Come from thy secret place, and try our  
strength,'—

Enwrapped me with their solemn arms.  
Here, light

\* Grew pale as darkness, scared by the  
shade

O'the forest Titans. Here, in piny state,  
Reigned Night, the Aethiopian queen,  
and crowned

The charmed brow of Solitude, her  
spouse.

A sign was on creation. You beheld  
All things encoloured in a sulph'rous hue,  
As day were sick with fear. The hag-  
gard clouds

O'erhung the utter lifelessness of air ;  
The top boughs of the forest, all aglath,  
Stared in the face of Heaven ; the deep-  
mouthed wind,

That hath a voice to bay the armed sea,  
Fled with a low cry like a beaten hound ;  
And only that askance the shadows flew  
Some open-beaked birds in wilderment,  
Naught stirred abroad. All dumb did  
Nature seem,

In expectation of the coming storm.

It came in power. You soon might hear  
afar

The footsteps of the martial thunder sound

Over the mountain battlements ; the sky  
 Being deep-stained with hues fantastical,  
 Red like to blood, and yellow like to fire,  
 And black like plumes at funerals ; over-  
 head  
 You might behold the lightning faintly  
 gleam  
 Amid the clouds which thrill and gape  
 aside,  
 And straight again shut up their solemn  
 jaws,  
 As if to interpose between Heaven's  
 wrath  
 And Earth's despair. Interposition brief !  
 Darkness gathering out her mighty pall  
 Above us, and the pent-up rain is loosed,  
 Down trampling in its fierce delirium.

Was not my spirit gladdened, as with  
 wine,  
 To hear the iron rain, and view the mark  
 Of battle on the banner of the clouds ?  
 Did I not hearken for the battle-cry,  
 And rush along the bowing woods to  
 meet  
 The riding Tempest—skyey cataracts  
 Hissing around him with rebellion vain ?  
 Yea ! and I lifted up my glorying voice  
 In an ' All hail ' ; when, wildly resonant,  
 As brazen chariots rushing from the war,  
 As passionate waters gushing from the  
 rock,  
 As thousand crashed woods, the thunder  
 cried :  
 And at his cry the forest tops were shook  
 As by the woodman's axe ; and far and  
 near  
 Staggered the mountains with a muttered  
 dread.

All hail unto the lightning ! hurriedly  
 His lurid arms are glaring through the air,  
 Making the face of Heaven to show like  
 hell !  
 Let him go breathe his sulphur stench  
 about,  
 And, pale with death's own mission,  
 lord the storm !  
 Again the gleam—the glare : I turned  
 to hail  
 Death's mission : at my feet there lay the  
 dead !

The dead—the dead lay there ! I could  
 not view  
 (For Night espoused the storm, and made  
 all dark)  
 Its features, but the lightning in its course  
 Shivered above a white and corpse-like  
 heap,  
 Stretched in the path, as if to show his  
 prey,  
 And have a triumph ere he passed.  
 Then I  
 Crouched down upon the ground, and  
 groped about  
 Until I touched that thing of flesh, rain-  
 drenched,  
 And chill, and soft. Nathless, I did re-  
 frain  
 My soul from natural horror ! I did lift  
 The heavy head, half-bedded in the clay,  
 Unto my knee ; and passed my fingers o'er  
 The wet face, touching every lineament,  
 Until I found the brow ; and chafed its  
 chill,  
 To know if life yet lingered in its pulse.  
 And while I was so busied, there did leap  
 From out the entrails of the firmament,  
 The lightning, who his white unblench-  
 ing breath  
 Blew in the dead man's face, discovering  
 it  
 As by a staring day. I knew that face—  
 His, who did hate me—his, whom I did  
 hate !  
 I shrunk not—spake not—sprang not  
 from the ground !  
 But felt my lips shake without cry or  
 breath,  
 And mine heart wrestle in my breast to  
 still  
 The tossing of its pulses ; and a cold,  
 Instead of living blood, o'ercreep my  
 brow.  
 Albeit such darkness brooded all around,  
 I had dread knowledge that the open  
 eyes  
 Of that dead man were glaring up to mine,  
 With their unwinking, unexpressive  
 stare ;  
 And mine I could not shut nor turn away.  
 The man was my familiar. I had borne  
 Those eyes to scowl on me their living  
 hate,

Better than I could bear their deadliness :  
I had endured the curses of those lips  
Far better than their silence. Oh, con-  
strained

And awful silence!—awful peace of  
death!

*There* is an answer to all questioning,  
That one word—*death*. Our bitterness  
can throw

No look upon the face of death, and live.  
The burning thoughts that erst my soul  
illumed

Were quenched at once ; as tapers in a  
pit

Wherein the vapour-witches weirdly  
reign

In charge of darkness. Farewell all the  
past !

It was out-blotted from my memory's eyes  
When clay's cold silence pleaded for its  
sin.

Farewell the elemental war ! farewell  
The clashing of the shielded clouds—the  
cry

Of scathed echoes ! I no longer knew  
Silence from sound, but wandered far  
away

Into the deep Eleusis of mine heart,  
To learn its secret things. When armed  
foes

Meet on one deck with impulse violent,  
The vessel quakes thro' all her oaken ribs,  
And shivers in the sea ; so with mine  
heart :

For there had battled in her solitudes,  
Contrary spirits ; sympathy with power,  
And stooping unto power ;—the energy  
And passiveness,—the thunder and the  
death !

Within me was a nameless thought : it  
closed

The Janus of my soul on echoing hinge,  
And said 'Peace !' with a voice like  
War's. I bowed,

And trembled at its voice : it gave a key,  
Empowered to open out all mysteries  
Of soul and flesh ; of man, who doth begin,  
But endeth not ; of life, and *after life*.

Day came at last : her light showed grey  
and sad,

As hatched by tempest, and could scarce  
prevail

Over the shaggy forest to imprint  
Its outline on the sky—express' onless,  
Almost sans shadow as sans radiance :  
An idiocy of light. I awakened from  
My deep unslumb'ring dream, but uttered  
naught.

My living I uncoupled from the dead,  
And looked out, 'mid the swart and  
sluggish air,

For place to make a grave. A mighty tree  
Above me, his gigantic arms out-  
stretched,

Poising the clouds. A thousand muttered  
spells

Of every ancient wind and thund'rous  
storm

Had been off-shaken from his scatheless  
bark.

He had heard distant years sweet con-  
cord yield,

And go to silence ; having firmly kept  
Majestical companionship with Time.

Anon his strength waxed proud : his  
tusk roots

Forced for themselves a path on every  
side,

Riving the earth ; and, in their savage  
scorn,

Casting it from them like a thing unclean,  
Which might impede his naked clamber-  
ing

Unto the heavens. Now blasted, peeled,  
he stood,

By the gone night, whose lightning had  
come in

And rent him, even as it rent the man  
Beneath his shade : and there the strong  
and weak

Communion joined in deathly agony.  
There, underneath, I lent my feverish  
strength,

To scoop a lodgement for the traveller's  
corse.

I gave it to the silence and the pit,  
And strewed the heavy earth on all :  
and then—

I—I, whose hands had formed that  
silent house,—

I could not look thereon, but turned and  
wept !

O Death—O crownèd Death—pale-steedèd Death !  
 Whose name doth make our respiration brief,  
 Muffling the spirit's drum ! Thou, whom men know  
 Alone by charnel-houses, and the dark  
 Sweeping of funeral feathers, and the scath  
 Of happy days,—love deemed inviolate !  
 Thou of the shrouded face, which to have seen  
 Is to be very awful, like thyself !—  
 Thou, whom all flesh shall see !—thou, who dost call,  
 And there is none to answer !—thou, whose call  
 Changeth all beauty into what we fear,  
 Changeth all glory into what we tread,  
 Genius to silence, wrath to nothingness,  
 And love—not love !—thou hast no change for love !  
 Thou, who art Life's betrothed, and bear'st her forth  
 To scare her with sad sights,—who hast thy joy  
 Where'er the peopled towns are dumb with plague,—  
 Where'er the battle and the vulture meet,—  
 Where'er the deep sea writhes like Laocoon  
 Beneath the serpent winds, and vessels split  
 On secret rocks, and men go gurgling down,  
 Down, down, to lose their shriekings in the depth !  
 O universal thou ! who comest ay  
 Among the minstrels, and their tongue is tied ;  
 Among the sophists, and their brain is still ;  
 Among the mourners, and their wail is done ;  
 Among the dancers, and their tinkling feet  
 No more make echoes on the tombing earth ;  
 Among the wassail rout, and all the lamps  
 Are quenched, and withered the wine-pouring hands !

Mine heart is armèd not in panoply  
 Of the old Roman iron, nor assumes  
 The Stoic valour. 'Tis a human heart,  
 And so confesses, with a human fear ;—  
 That only for the hope the cross inspires,  
 That only for the MAN who died and lives,  
 'Twould crouch beneath thy sceptre's royalty,  
 With faintness of the pulse, and backward cling  
 To life. But knowing what I soothly know,  
 High-seeming Death, I dare thee ! and have hope,  
 In God's good time, of showing to thy face  
 An unsuccumbing spirit, which sublime  
 May cast away the low anxieties  
 That wait upon the flesh—the reptile moods ;  
 And enter that eternity to come,  
 Where live the dead, and only Death shall die.

## A SEA-SIDE MEDITATION

Ut per aquas quae nunc rerum simulacra videmus.—LUCRETIVS.

Go, travel 'mid the hills ! The summer's hand  
 Hath shaken pleasant freshness o'er them all.  
 Go, travel 'mid the hills ! There, tuneful streams  
 Are touching myriad stops, invisible ;  
 And winds, and leaves, and birds, and your own thoughts  
 (Not the least glad) in wordless chorus, crowd  
 Around the thymel<sup>1</sup> of Nature.  
 Go,  
 And travel onward. Soon shall leaf and bird,  
 Wind, stream, no longer sound. Thou shalt behold  
 Only the pathless sky, and houseless sward ;  
 O'er which anon are spied innumerable  
 sails  
 Of fisher vessels like the wings o' the hill,

<sup>1</sup> The central point of the choral movements in the Greek theatre.

And white as gulls above them, and as fast,—

But sink they—sink they out of sight.  
And now

The wind is springing upward in your face ;

And, with its fresh-toned gushings, you may hear

Continuous sound which is not of the wind,

Nor of the thunder, nor o' the cataract's  
Deep passion, nor o' the earthquake's  
wilder pulse ;

But which rolls on in stern tranquillity,  
As memories of evil o'er the soul ;—

Boweth the bare broad Heaven.—What  
view you ! sea—and sea !

The sea—the glorious sea ! from side to side

Swinging the grandeur of his foamy strength,

And undersweeping the horizon,—on—  
On—with his life and voice inscrutable.

Pause : sit you down in silence ! I have read

Of that Athenian, who, when ocean raged,

Unchained the prisoned music of his lips  
By shouting to the billows, sound for sound.

I marvel how his mind would let his tongue

Affront thereby the ocean's solemnness.  
Are we not mute, or speak restrainedly,

When overhead the trampling tempests go,

Dashing their lightning from their hoofs ?  
and when

We stand beside the bier ! and when we see

The strong bow down to weep—and stray among

Places which dust or mind hath sanctified ?  
Yea ! for such sights and acts do tear apart

The close and subtle clasping of a chain,  
Formed not of gold, but of corroded brass,

Whose links are furnished from the common mine

Of every day's event, and want, and wish ;  
From work-times, diet-times, and sleep-

ing-times :

And thence constructed, mean and heavy links

Within the pandemonic walls of sense  
Enchain our deathless part, constrain

our strength,  
And waste the goodly stature of our soul.

Howbeit, we love this bondage ; we do cleave

Unto the sordid and unholy thing,  
Fearing the sudden wrench required to break

Those clasped links. Behold ! all sights and sounds

In air, and sea, and earth, and under earth,  
All flesh, all life, all ends, are mysteries ;

And all that is mysterious dreadful seems,  
And all we cannot understand we fear.

Ourselves do scare ourselves : we hide our sight

In artificial nature from the true,  
And throw sensation's veil associative

On God's creation, man's intelligence ;  
Bowling our high imaginings to eat

Dust, like the serpent, once erect as they ;  
Binding conspicuous on our reason's brow

Phylacteries of shame ; learning to feel  
By rote, and act by rule (man's rule,

not God's !),  
Unto our words grow echoes, and our thoughts

A mechanism of spirit.

Can this last ?

No ! not for aye. We cannot subject aye  
The heaven-born spirit to the earth-born

flesh.

Tame lions *will* scent blood, and appetite  
Carnivorous glare from out their restless

eyes.  
Passions, emotions, sudden changes, throw

Our nature back upon us, till we burn.  
What warned Cyrene's fount ? As poets

sing,  
The *change* from light to dark, from dark to light.

All that doth force this nature back on us,  
All that doth force the mind to view the

mind,  
Engend'reth what is named by men,

*sublime*.

Thus when, our wonted valley left, we gain

The mountain's horrent brow, and mark  
 from thence  
 The sweep of lands extending with the  
 sky ;  
 Or view the spanless plain ; or turn our  
 sight  
 Upon yon deep's immensity ;—we  
 breathe  
 As if our breath were marble : to and fro  
 Do reel our pulses, and our words are  
 mute.  
 We cannot mete by parts, but grapple all ;  
 We cannot measure with our eye, but  
 soul ;  
 And fear is on us. The extent unused,  
 Our spirit, sends, to spirit's element,  
 To seize upon abstractions : first on  
 space,  
 The which *eternity in place* I deem ;  
 And then upon eternity ; till thought  
 Hath formed a mirror from their secret  
 sense,  
 Wherein we view ourselves, and back  
 recoil  
 At our own awful likeness ; ne'ertheless,  
 Cling to that likeness with a wonder wild,  
 And while we tremble, glory—proud in  
 fear.  
 So ends the prose of life : and so shall be  
 Unlocked her poetry's magnific store.  
 And so, thou pathless and perpetual sea,  
 So, o'er thy deeps, I brooded and must  
 brood,  
 Whether I view thee in thy dreadful  
 peace,  
 Like a spent warrior hanging in the sun  
 His glittering arms, and meditating  
 death ;  
 Or whether thy wild visage gath'reth  
 shades,  
 What time thou marshall'st forth thy  
 waves who hold  
 A covenant of storms, then roar and  
 wind  
 Under the racking rocks ; as martyrs lie  
 Wheel-bound ; and, dying, utter lofty  
 words !  
 Whether the strength of day is young  
 and high,  
 Or whether, weary of the watch, he sits  
 Pale on thy wave, and weeps himself to  
 death ;—  
 In storm and calm, at morn and eventide,

Still have I stood beside thee, and out-  
 thrown  
 My spirit onward on thine element,—  
 Beyond thine element,—to tremble low  
 Before those feet which trod thee as  
 they trod  
 Earth,—to the holy, happy, peopled  
 place,  
 Where there is no more sea. Yea, and  
 my soul,  
 Having put on thy vast similitude,  
 Hath wildly moanèd at her proper depth,  
 Echoed her proper musings, veiled in  
 shade  
 Her secrets of decay, and exercised  
 An elemental strength, in casting up  
 Rare gems and things of death on fancy's  
 shore,  
 Till Nature said 'Enough.'  
 Who longest dreams,  
 Dreams not for ever ; seeing day and  
 night  
 And corporal feebleness divide his  
 dreams,  
 And on his elevate creations weigh  
 With hunger, cold, heat, darkness,  
 weariness :  
 Else should we be like gods ; else would  
 the course  
 Of thought's free wheels, increased in  
 speed and might  
 By an eterne volition, oversweep  
 The heights of wisdom, and invade her  
 depths :  
 So, knowing all things, should we have  
 all power ;  
 For is not Knowledge power ? But  
 mighty spells  
 Our operation sear ; the Babel must,  
 Or ere it touch the sky, fall down to earth :  
 The web, half formed, must tumble from  
 our hands,  
 And, ere they can resume it, lie decayed.  
 Mind struggles vainly from the flesh.  
 E'en so,  
 Hell's angel (saith a scroll apocryphal)  
 Shall, when the latter days of earth have  
 shrunk  
 Before the blast of God, affect his heaven ;  
 Lift his scarred brow, confirm his rebel  
 heart,  
 Shoot his strong wings, and darken pole  
 and pole,—

Till day be blotted into night ; and shake  
 The fevered clouds, as if a thousand  
     storms  
 Throbb'd into life ! Vain hope—vain  
     strength—vain flight !  
 God's arm shall meet God's foe, and hurl  
     him back !

### A VISION OF LIFE AND DEATH

MINE ears were deaf to melody,  
 My lips were dumb to sound :  
 Where didst thou wander, O my soul,  
 When ear and tongue were bound ?

'I wandered by the stream of time,  
 Made dark by human tears :  
 I threw my voice upon the waves,  
 And *they* did throw me theirs.'

And how did sound the waves, my soul ?  
 And how did sound the waves ?

'Hoarse, hoarse, and wild !—they ever  
     dashed  
 'Gainst ruined thrones and graves.'

And what sight on the shore, my soul ?  
 And what sight on the shore ?  
 'Twain beings sate there silently,  
 And sit there evermore.'

Now tell me fast and true, my soul ;  
 Now tell me of those twain.  
 'One was yclothed in mourning vest,  
 And one, in trappings vain.

'She in the trappings vain was fair,  
 And eke fantastical :  
 A thousand colours dyed her garb ;  
 A blackness bound them all.

'In part her hair was gaily wreathed,  
 In part was wildly spread :  
 Her face did change its hue too fast,  
 To say 'twas pale or red.

'And when she looked on earth, I thought  
 She smiled for very glee :  
 But when she looked to heaven, I knew  
 That tears stood in her ee.

'She held a mirror, there to gaze :  
 It could no cheer bestow ;  
 For while her beauty cast the shade,  
 Her breath did make it go.

'A harper's harp did lie by her,  
 Without the harper's hest ;  
 A monarch's crown did lie by her,  
 Wherein an owl had nest :

'A warrior's sword did lie by her,  
 Grown rusty since the fight ;  
 A poet's lamp did lie by her :—  
 Ah me !—where was its light ?'

And what didst *thou* say, O my soul,  
 Unto that mystic dame ?

'I asked her of her tears, and eke  
 I asked her of her name.

'She said, she built a prince's throne :  
 She said, he ruled the grave ;  
 And that the levelling worm asked not  
 If he were king or slave.

'She said, she formed a godlike tongue,  
 Which lofty thoughts unsheathed ;  
 Which rolled its thunder round, and  
     purged  
 The air the nations breathed.

'She said, that tongue, all eloquent,  
 With silent dust did mate ;  
 Whereon false friends betrayed long faith,  
 And foes outspat their hate.

'She said, she warmed a student's heart,  
 But heart and brow 'gan fade :  
 Alas, alas ! those Delphic trees  
 Do cast an upas shade !

'She said, she lighted happy hearths,  
 Whose mirth was all forgot :  
 She said, she tun'd marriage bells,  
 Which rang when love was *not*.

'She said, her name was Life ; and then  
 Out laughed and wept aloud,—  
 What time the other being strange  
 Lifted the veiling shroud.

'Yea ! lifted she the veiling shroud,  
 And breathed the icy breath :  
 Whereat, with inward shuddering,  
 I knew *her* name was Death.

'Yea ! lifted she her calm, calm brow,  
 Her clear cold smile on me :  
 Whereat within my deepness, leaped  
 Mine immortality.

'She told me, it did move her smile,  
To witness how I sighed,  
Because that what was fragile brake,  
And what was mortal died :

'As if that kings could grasp the earth,  
Who from its dust began ;  
As if that suns could shine at night,  
Or glory dwell with man.

'She told me, she had freed *his* soul,  
Who ay did freedom love ;  
Who now recked not, were worms below,  
Or ranker worms above !

'She said, the student's heart had beat  
Against its prison dim ;  
Until she crushed the bars of flesh,  
And poured truth's light on him.

'She said, that they who left the hearth,  
For ay in sunshine dwell ;  
She said, the funeral tolling brought  
More joy than marriage bell !

'And as she spake, she spake less loud ;  
The stream resounded more :  
Anon I nothing heard but waves  
That wailed along the shore.'

And what didst thou say, O my soul,  
Upon that mystic strife ?

'I said, that Life was only Death,  
That only Death was Life.'

### EARTH

How beautiful is earth ! my starry  
thoughts

Look down on it from their unearthly  
sphere,

And sing symphonious—Beautiful is  
earth !

The lights and shadows of her myriad  
hills ;

The branching greenness of her myriad  
woods ;

Her sky-affecting rocks ; her zoning sea ;  
Her rushing, gleaming cataracts ; her  
streams

That race below, the winged clouds on  
high ;

Her pleasantness of vale and meadow !—

Hush !

Meseemeth through the leafy trees toring  
A chime of bells to falling waters tuned ;  
Whereat comes heathen Zephyrus, out  
of breath

With running up the hills, and shakes  
his hair

From off his gleesome forehead, bold  
and glad

With keeping blythe Dan Phoebeus  
company ;—

And throws him on the grass, though  
half afraid ;

First glancing round, lest tempests should  
be nigh ;

And lays close to the ground his ruddy  
lips,

And shapes their beauty into sound, and  
calls

On all the petalled flowers, that sit beneath  
In hiding-places from the rain and snow,

To loosen the hard soil, and leave their  
cold

Sad idlesse, and betake them up to him.  
They straightway hear his voice—

A thought did come,  
And press from out my soul the heathen  
dream.

Mine eyes were purged. Straightway  
did I bind

Round me the garment of my strength,  
and heard

Nature's death-shrieking—the hereafter  
cry,

When he o' the lion voice, the rainbow-  
crowned,

Shall stand upon the mountains and the  
sea,

And swear by earth, by Heaven's throne,  
and Him

Who sitteth on the throne, there shall  
be time

No more, no more ! Then, veiled Eternity  
Shall straight unveil her awful counten-  
ance

Unto the reeling worlds, and take the  
place

Of seasons, years, and ages. Ay and ay  
Shall be the time of day. The wrinkled  
heaven

Shall yield her silent sun, made blind  
and white

With an exterminating light: the wind,  
Unchained from the poles, nor having  
charge

Of cloud or ocean, with a sobbing wail  
Shall rush among the stars, and swoon  
to death.

Yea, the shrunk earth, appearing livid  
pale

Beneath the red-tongued flame, shall  
shudder by

From out her ancient place, and leave—  
a void.

Yet haply by that void the saints re-  
deemed

May sometimes stray; when memory of  
sin

Ghost-likeshall rise upon their holysouls;  
And on their lips shall lie the name of  
earth

In paleness and in silentness; until  
Each looking on his brother, face to face,  
And bursting into sudden happy tears  
(The only tears undried) shall murmur—  
'Christ!'

#### THE PICTURE GALLERY AT PENSURST

THEY spoke unto me from the silent  
ground,

They looked unto me from the pictured  
wall:

The echo of my footstep was a sound  
Like to the echo of their own footfall,  
What time their living feet were in the  
hall.

I breathed where they had breathed—  
and where they brought

Their souls to moralize on glory's pall,  
I walked with silence in a cloud of  
thought:

So, what they erst had learned, I mine  
own spirit taught.

Aye! with mine eyes of flesh, I did  
behold

The likeness of their flesh! They, the  
great dead,

Stood still upon the canvas, while I told  
The glorious memories to their ashes  
wed.

There, I beheld the Sidneys:—he,  
who bled

Freely for freedom's sake, bore gal-  
lantly

His soul upon his brow;—he, whose  
lute said

Sweet music to the land, meseemed to  
be

Dreaming, with that pale face, of love  
and Arcadie.

Mine heart had shrined these. And  
therefore past

Were these, and such as these, in mine  
heart's pride,

Which deemed death glory's other  
name. At last

I stayed my pilgrim feet, and paused  
beside

A picture<sup>1</sup>, which the shadows half  
did hide.

The form was a fair woman's form;  
the brow

Brightly between the clustering curls  
espied:

The cheek a little pale, yet seeming so  
As, if the lips could speak, the paleness  
soon would go.

And rested there the lips, so warm  
and loving,

That, they *could* speak, one might be  
fain to guess:

Only they had been much too bright,  
if moving,

To stay by their own will, all motion-  
less.

One outstretched hand its marble seal  
'gan press

On roses which looked fading; while  
the eyes,

Uplifted in a calm, proud loveliness,  
Seemed busy with their flow'ry

destinies,  
Drawing, for ladye's heart, some moral  
quaint and wise.

She perished like her roses. I did look  
On her, as she did look on them—to  
sigh!

Alas, alas! that the fair-written book  
Of her sweet face should be in death  
laid by,

<sup>1</sup> Vandyke's portrait of Waller's Sacharissa.

As any blotted scroll ! Its cruelty  
Poisoned a heart most gentle-pulsed  
of all,  
And turned it unto song, therein to  
die :  
For grief's stern tension maketh  
musical,  
Unless the strained string break or ere  
the music fall.

Worship of Waller's heart ! no dream  
of thine  
Revealed unto thee, that the lowly one,  
Who sate enshadowed near thy  
beauty's shine,  
Should, when the light was out, the  
life was done,  
Record thy name with those by  
Memory won  
From Time's eternal burial. I am  
wooded  
By wholesome thoughts this sad  
thought hath begun ;  
For mind is strengthened when awhile  
subdued,  
As he who touched the earth, and rose  
with power renewed.

#### TO A POET'S CHILD

A FAR harp swept the sea above ;  
A far voice said thy name in love :  
Then silence on the harp was cast ;  
The voice was chained—the love went  
last !

And as I heard the melodie,  
Sweet-voicèd Fancy spake of thee :  
And as the silence o'er it came,  
Mine heart, in silence, sighed thy name.

I thought there was one only place,  
Where thou couldst lift thine orphaned  
face :

A little home for prayer and woe ;—  
A stone above—a shroud below ;—

That evermore, that stone beside,  
Thy withered joys would form thy  
pride ;

As palm-trees, on their South Sea bed,  
Make islands with the flowers they shed.

Child of the Dead ! my dream of thee  
Was sad to tell, and dark to see ;  
And vain as many a brighter dream ;  
Since thou canst sing by Babel's stream !

For here, amid the worldly crowd,  
'Mid common brows, and laughter loud,  
And hollow words, and feelings sere,  
Child of the Dead ! I meet thee here !

And is thy step so fast and light ?  
And is thy smile so gay and bright ?  
And *canst* thou smile, with cheek undim,  
Upon a world that frowned on *him* ?

The minstrel's harp is on his bier ;  
What doth the minstrel's orphan here ?  
The loving moulders in the clay ;  
The loved,—she keepeth holiday !

'Tis well ! I would not doom thy years  
Of golden prime, to only tears.  
Fair girl ! 'twere better that thine eyes  
Should find a joy in summer skies,

As if their sun were on thy fate.  
Be happy ; strive not to be great ;  
And go not from thy kind apart,  
With lofty soul and stricken heart.

Think not too deeply : shallow thought,  
Like open rills, is ever sought  
By light and flowers ; while fountains  
deep  
Amid the rocks and shadows sleep.

Feel not too warmly : lest thou be  
Too like Cyrene's waters free,  
Which burn at night, when all around  
In darkness and in chill is found.

Touch not the harp to win the wreath :  
Its tone is fame, its echo death !  
The wreath may like the laurel grow,  
Yet turns to cypress on the brow !

And, as a flame springs clear and bright,  
Yet leaveth ashes 'stead of light ;  
So genius (fatal gift !) is doomed  
To leave the heart it fired, consumed.

For thee, for thee, thou orphaned one,  
I make an humble orison !  
Love all the world ; and ever dream  
That all are true who truly seem.

Forget! for, so, 'twill move thee not,  
Or lightly move; to be forgot!  
Be streams thy music; hills, thy mirth;  
Thy chiefest light, the household hearth.

So, when grief plays her natural part,  
And visiteth thy quiet heart;  
Shall all the clouds of grief be seen  
To show a sky of hope between.

So, when thy beauty senseless lies,  
No sculptured urn shall o'er thee rise;  
But gentle eyes shall weep at will,  
Such tears as hearts like thine distil.

### MINSTRELSY

One asked her once the reason why  
She hadde delyte in minstrelsie;  
She answered on this manere.

ROBERT DE BRUNNE.

For ever, since my childish looks  
Could rest on Nature's pictured books;  
For ever, since my childish tongue  
Could name the themes our bards have  
sung;

So long, the sweetness of their singing  
Hath been to me a rapture bringing!—  
Yet ask me not the reason why  
I have delight in minstrelsy.

I know that much whereof I sing  
Is shapen but for vanishing;  
I know that summer's flower and leaf  
And shine and shade are very brief,  
And that the heart they brighten may,  
Before them all, be sheathed in clay!—  
I do not know the reason why  
I have delight in minstrelsy.

A few there are whose smile and praise  
My minstrel hope would kindly raise:  
But, of those few—Death may impress  
The lips of some with silentness;  
Whilesome may friendship's faith resign,  
And heed no more a song of mine.—  
Ask not, ask not the reason why  
I have delight in minstrelsy.

The sweetest song that minstrels sing  
Will charm not joy to tarrying;  
The greenest bay that earth can grow  
Will shelter not in burning woe;

A thousand voices will not cheer  
When *one* is mute that ay is dear!—  
Is there, alas! no reason why  
I have delight in minstrelsy?

I do not know! The turf is green  
Beneath the rain's fast-dropping sheer  
Yet asks not why that deeper hue  
Doth all its tender leaves renew;—  
And I, like-minded, am content,  
While music to my soul is sent,  
To question not the reason why  
I have delight in minstrelsy.

Years pass—my life with them shall pass  
And soon the cricket in the grass,  
And summer bird, shall louder sing  
Than she who owns a minstrel's string  
Oh, then may some, the dear and few,  
Recall her love, whose truth they knew  
When all forget to question why  
She had delight in minstrelsy!

### TO THE MEMORY OF

SIR UVEDALE PRICE, BART.

FAREWELL!—a word that human life  
bestow

On all that human hearts delight to know  
On summer skies, and scenes that change  
as fast;

On ocean calms, and faith as fit to last  
On Life, from Love's own arms, that  
breaks away;

On hopes that 'blind, and glories that  
decay!

And ever thus 'farewell, farewell,' is said  
As round the hills of lengthening time  
we tread;

As at each step the winding ways unfold  
Some untried prospect which obscures  
the old;—

Perhaps a prospect brightly coloured of old  
Yet not with brightness that we love  
before;

And dull and dark the brightest hue  
appears

To eyes like ours, surcharged and dim  
with tears.

Oft, oft we wish the winding road we  
past,

And yon supernal summit gained at last

Where all that gradual change removed,  
is found  
At once, for ever, as you look around;  
Where every scene by tender eyes surveyed,  
And lost and wept for, to their gaze is spread—  
No tear to dim the sight, no shade to fall,  
But Heaven's own sunshine lighting,  
charming all.

Farewell!—a common word—and yet  
how drear  
And strange it soundeth as I write it here!  
How strange that *thou* a place of death  
shouldst fill,  
Thy brain unlighted, and thine heart  
grown chill!  
And dark the eye, whose plausive glance  
to draw  
Incited Nature brake her tyrant's law!  
And deaf the ear, to charm whose organ  
true  
Maonian music tuned her harp anew!  
And mute the lips where Plato's bee  
hath roved;  
And motionless the hand that genius  
moved!—  
Ah, friend! thou speakest not!—but still  
to me  
Do Genius, Music, Nature, speak of  
*thee*!—  
Still golden fancy, still the sounding line,  
And waving wood, recall some word of  
thine:  
Some word, some look, whose living  
light is o'er—  
And Memory sees what Hope can see  
no more.

Twice, twice, thy voice hath spoken.  
Twice there came  
To us a change, a joy—to thee, a fame!  
Thou spakest once<sup>1</sup>, and every pleasant  
sight,  
Woods waving wild, and fountains gush-  
ing bright,  
Cool copses, grassy banks, and all the  
dyes  
Of shade and sunshine gleamed before  
our eyes.

Thou spakest twice<sup>2</sup>; and every pleasant  
sound  
Its ancient silken harmony unwound,  
From Doric pipe and Attic lyre that  
lay  
Enclasped in hands whose cunning is  
decay.  
And now no more thou speakest! Death  
hath met  
And won thee to him! Oh, remembered  
yet!  
We cannot *see*, and *hearken*, and forget!  
My thoughts are far. I think upon the  
time  
When Foxley's purple hills and woods  
sublime  
Were thrilling at thy step; when thou  
didst throw  
Thy burning spirit on the vale below,  
To bathe its sense in beauty. Lovely  
ground!  
There, never more shall step of thine re-  
sound!  
There, Spring again shall come, but find  
thee not,  
And deck with humid eyes her favourite  
spot;  
Strew tender green on paths thy foot  
forsakes,  
And make that fair, which Memory  
saddest makes.  
For me, all sorrowful, unused to raise  
A minstrel song and dream not of thy  
praise,  
Upon thy grave my tuneless harp I lay,  
Nor try to sing what only tears can  
say.  
So warm and fast the ready waters  
swell—  
So weak the faltering voice thou knewest  
well!  
Thy words of kindness calmed that voice  
before;  
*Now*, thoughts of *them* but make it  
tremble more;  
And leave its theme to others, and de-  
part  
To dwell within the silence where thou  
art.

<sup>1</sup> *Essay on the Picturesque.*

<sup>2</sup> *Essay on the Pronunciation of the Ancient Languages.*

## THE AUTUMN

Go, sit upon the lofty hill,  
 And turn your eyes around,  
 Where waving woods and waters wild  
 Do hymn an autumn sound.  
 The summer sun is faint on them—  
 The summer flowers depart—  
 Sit still—as all transformed to stone,  
 Except your musing heart.

How there you sate in summer-time,  
 May yet be in your mind;  
 And how you heard the green woods  
 sing  
 Beneath the freshening wind.  
 Though the same wind now blows around,  
 You would its blast recall;  
 For every breath that stirs the trees  
 Doth cause a leaf to fall.

Oh! like that wind, is all the mirth  
 That flesh and dust impart;  
 We cannot bear its visitings,  
 When change is on the heart.  
 Gay words and jests may make us smile  
 When Sorrow is asleep;  
 But other things must make us smile  
 When Sorrow bids us *weep*!

The dearest hands that clasp our hands,—  
 Their presence may be o'er;  
 The dearest voice that meets our ear,  
 That tone may come no more!  
 Youth fades; and then, the joys of  
 youth,  
 Which once refreshed our mind,  
 Shall come—as, on those sighing woods,  
 The chilling autumn wind.

Hear not the wind—view not the  
 woods;  
 Look out o'er vale and hill:  
 In spring, the sky encircled them—  
 The sky is round them still.  
 Come, autumn's scathe, come winter's  
 cold,  
 Come change—and human fate!  
 Whatever prospect HEAVEN doth bound  
 Can ne'er be desolate.

THE DEATH-BED OF TERESA  
DEL RIEGO

Si fia muta ogni altra cosa, al fine  
 Parlerà il mio morire,  
 E ti dirà la morte il mio martire.  
 GUARINI.

THE room was darkened; but a wan  
 lamp shed  
 Its light upon a half-uncurtained bed,  
 Whereon the widowed sate. Blackly  
 as death  
 Her veiling hair hung round her, and no  
 breath  
 Came from her lips to motion it. Between  
 Its parted clouds, the calm fair face was  
 seen  
 In a snow paleness, and snow silentness,  
 With eyes unquenchable, whereon did  
 press  
 A little, their white lids, so taught to lie,  
 By weights of frequent tears wept  
 secretly.  
 Her hands were clasped and raised—the  
 lamp did fling  
 A glory on her brow's meek suffering.

Beautiful form of woman! seeming made  
 Alone to shine in mirrors, there to braid  
 The hair and zone the waist—to garland  
 flowers—  
 To walk like sunshine through the orange  
 bowers—  
 To strike her land's guitar—and often see  
 In other eyes how lovely hers must be—  
 Grew she acquaint with anguish? Did  
 she sever  
 For ever from the one she loved for ever,  
 To dwell among the strangers? Aye!  
 and she,  
 Who shone most brightly in that festive  
 glee,  
 Sate down in this despair most patiently.

Some hearts are Niobes! in grief's down-  
 sweeping  
 They turn to very stone from over-  
 weeping,  
 And after, feel no more. Hers did remain  
 In life, which is the power of feeling  
 pain,

Till pain consumed the life so called below.  
She heard that he was dead!—she asked  
not how—

For *he* was dead! She wailed not o'er  
his urn,

For *he* was dead—and in *her* hands, should  
burn

His vestal flame of honour radiantly :  
Sighing would dim its light—she did not  
sigh.

She only died. They laid her in the  
ground,

Whereon th' unloving tread, and accents  
sound

Which are not of her Spain. She left  
behind,

For those among the strangers who were  
kind

Unto the poor heartbroken, her dark hair.  
It once was gauded out with jewels rare ;

It swept her dying pillow—it doth lie  
Beside me (thank the giver) droopingly,

And very long and bright! Its tale doth go  
Half to the dumb grave, half to lifetime

woe,  
Making the heart of man, if manly, ring  
Like Dodonaean brass, with echoing.

#### TO VICTOIRE, ON HER MARRIAGE

VICTOIRE! I knew thee in thy land,  
Where I was strange to all :  
I heard thee ; and were strange to me  
The words thy lips let fall.

I loved thee—for the Babel curse  
Was meant not for the heart :  
I parted from thee, in such way  
As those who love may part.

And now a change hath come to us,  
A sea doth rush between !  
I do not know if we can be  
Again as we have been.

I sit down in mine English land,  
Mine English hearth beside ;  
And thou, to one I never knew,  
Art plighted for a bride.

It will not wrong thy present joy  
With bygone days to wend ;  
Nor wrongeth it mine English hearth  
To love my Gallic friend.

Bind, bind the wreath ! the slender ring  
Thy wedded finger press !  
May he who calls thy love his own,  
Call so thine happiness !

Be he Terpander to thine heart,  
And string fresh strings of gold,  
Which may outgive new melodies,  
But never mar the old !

And though I clasp no more thy hand  
In my hand, and rejoice—  
And though I see thy face no more,  
And hear no more thy voice—

Farewell, farewell !—let thought of me  
Visit thine heart ! There is  
In mine the very selfish prayer  
That prayeth for thy bliss !

#### TO A BOY

WHEN my last song was said for thee  
Thy golden hair swept, long and free,  
Around thee ; and a dove-like tone  
Was on thy voice—or Nature's own :  
And every phrase and word of thine  
Went out in lisping infantine !  
Thy small steps faltering round our  
hearth—

Thine een out-peering in their mirth—  
Blue een ! that, like thine heart, seemed  
given

To be, for ever, full of heaven !  
Wert thou, in sooth, made up of glee,  
When my last song was said for thee ?

And now more years are finished,—  
For thee another song is said.  
Thy voice hath lost its cooing tone ;  
The lisping of thy words is gone :  
Thy step treads firm—thine hair not flings  
Round thee its length of golden rings—  
Departed, like all lovely things !  
Yet art thou still made up of glee,  
When my *now* song is said for thee.

Wisely and well responded they,  
Who cut thy golden hair away,

What time I made the bootless prayer,  
That they should pause awhile, and spare.  
They said, 'its sheen did less agree  
With boyhood than with infancy.'  
And thus I know it ay must be :  
Before the revel noise is done,  
The revel lamps pale one by one.

Aye! Nature loveth not to bring  
Crowned victims to life's labouring.  
The mirth-efullgent eye appears  
Less sparkling—to make room for tears :  
After the heart's quick throbs depart,  
We lose the gladness of the heart :  
And, after we have lost awhile  
The rose o' the lip, we lose its smile :  
As Beauty could not bear to press  
Near the death-pyre of Happiness.

This seemeth but a sombre dream ?  
It hath more pleasant thoughts than seem.  
The older a young tree doth grow  
The deeper shade it sheds below ;  
But makes the grass more green—the air  
More fresh, than had the sun been there.  
And thus our human life is found,  
Albeit a darkness gather round :  
For patient virtues, that their light  
May shine to all men, want the night :  
And holy Peace, unused to cope,  
Sits meekly at the tomb of Hope,  
Saying that 'she is risen !'

Then I

Will sorrow not at destiny,—  
Though from thine eyes, and from thine  
heart,  
The glory of their light depart ;  
Though on thy voice, and on thy brow,  
Should come a fiercer change than now ;  
Though thou no more be made of glee,  
When my next song is said for thee.

### REMONSTRANCE

Oh, say not it is vain to weep  
That deafened bier above ;  
Where genius has made room for death,  
And life is past from love ;  
That tears can never his bright looks  
And tender words restore :  
I know it is most vain to weep—  
And therefore weep the more !

Oh, say not I shall cease to weep  
When years have withered by ;  
That ever I shall speak of joy,  
As if he could reply ;  
That ever mine unquivering lips  
Shall name the name he bore :  
I know that I may cease to weep,  
And therefore weep the more !

Say, Time, who slew mine happiness,  
Will leave to me my woe ;  
And woe's own stony strength shall chain  
These tears' impassioned flow :  
Or say, that these, my ceaseless tears,  
May life to death restore ;  
For then my soul were wept away,  
And I should weep no more !

### REPLY

To weep awhile beside the bier,  
Whereon his ashes lie,  
Is well !—I know that rains must fall  
When clouds are in the sky :  
I know, *to die—to part*, will cloud  
The brightest spirit o'er ;  
And yet, wouldst *thou* for ever weep,  
When *he* can weep no more !

Fix not thy sight so long and fast  
Upon the shroud's despair ;  
Look upward unto Zion's hill,  
For death was also *there* !  
And think, 'The death, the scourge, the  
scorn,  
My sinless Saviour bore—  
The curse—the pang, too deep for  
tears—  
That I should weep no more !'

### EPITAPH

BEAUTY, who softly walkest all thy days  
In silken garment to the tunes of praise ;—  
Lover, whose dreamings by the green-  
banked river,  
Where once she wandered, fain would  
last for ever ;—  
King, whom the nations scan, adoring  
scan,  
And shout 'a god,' when sin hath marked  
thee man ;—

Bard, on whose brow the Hyblan dew  
remains,  
Albeit the fever burneth in the veins ;—  
Hero, whose sword in tyrant's blood is  
hot ;—  
Sceptic, who doubting, wouldst be  
doubted not ;—  
Man, whose'er thou art, whate'er thy  
trust ;—  
Respect thyself in me ;—thou treadest  
dust.

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THE IMAGE OF GOD

I am God, and there is none like me.  
*Isaiah xli. 9.*  
Christ, who is the image of God.  
*2 Corinthians iv. 4.*

Thou! art thou like to God?  
(I asked this question of the glorious  
sun)  
Thou high unwearied one,  
Whose course in heat, and light, and life  
is run!

Eagles may view thy face—clouds can  
assuage  
Thy fiery wrath—the sage  
Can mete thy stature—thou shalt fade  
with age.  
Thou art not like to God.

Thou! art thou like to God?  
(I asked this question of the bounteous  
earth)  
O thou, who givest birth  
To forms of beauty and to sounds of  
mirth?

In all thy glory works the worm decay—  
Thy golden harvests stay  
For seed and toil—thy power shall pass  
away.  
Thou art not like to God.

Thou! art thou like to God?  
(I asked this question of my deathless  
soul)  
O thou, whose musings roll  
Above the thunder, o'er creation's whole?

Thou art not. Sin, and shame, and agony  
Within thy deepness lie :  
They utter forth their voice in thee, and  
cry,  
'Thou art not like to God.'  
Then art Thou like to God ;  
Thou, who didst bear the sin, and shame,  
and woe—  
O Thou, whose sweat did flow—  
Whose tears did gush—whose brow was  
dead and low!

No grief is like Thy grief ; no heart can  
prove  
Love like unto Thy love ;  
And none, save only Thou,—below,  
above,—

O God, is like to God!

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THE APPEAL

CHILDREN of our England! stand  
On the shores that girt our land ;  
The aegis of whose cloud-white rock  
Braveth Time's own battle-shock.  
Look above the wide, wide world ;  
Where the northern blasts have furled  
Their numbed wings amid the snows,  
Mutt'ring in a forced repose—  
Or where the maddened sun on high  
Shakes his torch athwart the sky,  
Till within their prison sere,  
Chained earthquakes groan for fear!  
Look above the wide, wide world,  
Where a gauntlet Sin hath hurled  
To astonished Life ; and where  
Death's gladiatorial smile doth glare,  
On making the arena bare.  
Shout aloud the words that show  
Jesus in the sands and snow ;—  
Shout aloud the words that free,  
Over the perpetual sea.

Speak ye. As a breath will sweep  
Avalanche from Alpine steep,  
So the spoken word shall roll  
Fear and darkness from the soul.  
Are ye men, and love not man?  
Love ye, and permit his ban!  
Can ye, dare ye, rend the chain  
Wrought of common joy and pain,  
Clasping with its links of gold,  
Man to man in one strong hold?

Lo! if the golden links ye sever,  
 Ye shall make your heart's flesh quiver;  
 And wheresoe'er the links are reft,  
 There shall be a bloodstain left.  
 To earth's remotest rock repair,  
 Ye shall find a vulture there:  
 Though for others sorrowing not,  
 Your own tears shall still be hot:  
 Though ye play a lonely part;  
 Though ye bear an iron heart;—  
 Woe, like Echetus, still must  
 Grind your iron into dust.

But, children of our Britain, ye  
 Rend not man's chain of sympathy;  
 To those who sit in woe and night,  
 Denying tears and hiding light.  
 Ye have stretched your hands abroad  
 With the Spirit's sheathless sword:  
 Ye have spoken—and the tone  
 To earth's extremest verge hath gone:  
 East and west sublime it rolls,  
 Echoed by a million souls!  
 The wheels of rapid circling years,  
 Erst hot with crime, are quenched in tears.  
 Rocky hearts wild waters pour,  
 That were chained in stone before:  
 Bloody hands, that only bare  
 Hilted sword, are clasped in prayer:  
 Savage tongues, that wont to fling  
 Shouts of war in deathly ring,  
 Speak the name which angels sing.  
 Dying lips are lit the while  
 With a most undying smile,  
 Which reposing there, instead  
 Of language, when the lips are dead,  
 Saith,—'No sound of grief or pain  
 Shall haunt us when we move again.'

Children of our country! brothers  
 To the children of all others!  
 Shout aloud the words that show  
 Jesus in the sands and snow;—  
 Shout aloud the words that free,  
 Over the perpetual sea!

### IDOLS

How weak the gods of this world are—  
 And weaker yet their worship made  
 me!  
 I have been an idolater  
 Of three—and three times they be-  
 trayed me!

Mine oldest worshipping was given  
 To natural Beauty, ay residing  
 In bowery earth and starry heaven,  
 In ebbing sea, and river gliding.

But natural Beauty shuts her bosom  
 To what the natural feelings tell!  
 Albeit I sighed, the trees would blossom—  
 Albeit I smiled, the blossoms feil.

Then left I earthly sights, to wander  
 Amid a grove of name divine,  
 Where bay-reflecting streams meander,  
 And Moloch Fame hath reared a shrine.

Not green, but black, is that reflection;  
 On rocky beds those waters lie;  
 That grove hath chillness and dejection—  
 How could I sing? I had to sigh.

Last, human Love, thy Lares greeting,  
 To rest and warmth I vowed my years.  
 To rest? how wild my pulse is beating!  
 To warmth? ah me! my burning tears.

Aye, *they* may burn—though thou be  
 frozen  
 By death, and changes wint'ring on!  
 Fame!—Beauty!—idols madly chosen—  
 Were yet of gold; but *thou* art stone!

Crumble like stone! my voice no longer  
 Shall wail their names, who silent be:  
 There is a voice that soundeth stronger—  
 'My daughter, give thine heart to *Me*.'

Lord! take mine heart! O first and  
 fairest,  
 Whom all creation's ends shall hear;  
 Who deathless love in death declarest!  
 None else is beautiful—famous—  
 dear!

### HYMN

Lord, I cry unto Thee, make haste unto me.  
*Psalms cxli.*  
 The Lord is nigh unto all them that call upon  
 Him. *Psalms cxlv.*

SINCE without Thee we do no good,  
 And with Thee do no ill,  
 Abide with us in weal and woe,—  
 In action and in will.

In weal,—that while our lips confess  
The Lord who 'gives,' we may  
Remember, with an humble thought,  
The Lord who 'takes away.'

In woe,—that while to drowning tears  
Our hearts their joys resign,  
We may remember *who* can turn  
Such water into wine.

By hours of day,—that when our feet  
O'er hill and valley run,  
We still may think the light of truth  
More welcome than the sun.

By hours of night,—that when the air  
Its dew and shadow yields,  
We still may hear the voice of God  
In silence of the fields.

Oh! then sleep comes on us like death,  
All soundless, deaf, and deep :  
Lord! teach us so to watch and pray,  
That death may come like sleep.

Abide with *us*, abide with *us*,  
While flesh and soul agree ;  
And when our flesh is only dust,  
Abide our souls with *Thee*.

## WEARINESS

MINE eyes are weary of surveying  
The fairest things, too soon decaying ;  
Mine ears are weary of receiving  
The kindest words—ah, past believing !  
Weary my hope, of ebb and flow ;  
Weary my pulse, of tunes of woe :  
My trusting heart is weariest !  
I would—I would I were at rest !

For *me*, can earth refuse to fade ?  
For *me*, can words be faithful made ?  
Will *my* embittered hope be sweet ?  
*My* pulse forgo the human beat !  
No! Darkness must consume mine eye—  
Silence, mine ear—hope cease—pulse  
die—

And o'er mine heart a stone be pressed—  
Or vain this,—' Would I were at rest !'

There is a land of rest deferred :  
Nor eye hath seen, nor ear hath heard,  
Nor Hope hath trod the precinct o'er ;  
For hope beheld is hope no more !  
There, human pulse forgets its tone—  
There, hearts may know as they are  
known !

Oh, for dove's wings, thou dwelling blest,  
To fly to *thee*, and be at rest !

# THE SERAPHIM

Some to sing, and some to say,  
Some to weep, and some to pray.—SKELTON.

## PREFACE TO THE FIRST EDITION, 1838

It is natural for every writer who has not published frequently to revert, at least in thought, to his last work, in risking the publication of a new one. To me this is most natural, the subject of the principal poem in the present collection having suggested itself to me, though very faintly and imperfectly, when I was engaged upon my translation of the *Prometheus Bound* of Aeschylus.

I thought that, had Aeschylus lived after the incarnation and crucifixion of our Lord Jesus Christ, he might have turned, if not in moral and intellectual yet in poetic faith, from the solitude of Caucasus to the deeper desertness of that crowded Jerusalem where none had any pity; from the 'faded white flower' of the Titanic brow, to the 'withered grass' of a heart trampled on by its own beloved; from the glorying of him who gloried that he could not die, to the sublimer meekness of the Taster of death for every man; from the taunt stung into being by the torment, to His more awful silence, when the agony stood dumb before the love! And I thought how, 'from the height of this great argument,' the scenery of the *Prometheus* would have dwarfed itself even in the eyes of its poet,—how the fissures of his rocks and the innumerable smiles of his ocean would have closed and waned into blankness,—and his demigod stood confessed so human a conception as to fall below the aspiration of his own humanity. He would have turned from such to the rent rocks and darkened sun—rent and darkened by a sympathy thrilling through nature but leaving man's heart untouched—to the multitudes whose victim was their Saviour: to the Victim, whose sustaining thought beneath an unexampled agony was not the Titanic 'I can revenge,' but the celestial 'I can forgive!'

The subjects of my two books lie side by side. The *Prometheus* of Aeschylus is avowedly one of the very noblest of human imaginations; and when we measure it with the eternal counsel we know at once and for ever how wide is the difference between man's ideal and God's divine!

The great tragic soul, though untaught directly of Deity, brooded over His creation with exhaustless faculties, until it gave back to her a thought—vast, melancholy, beneficent, malign—the Titan on the rock, the reflected image of her own fallen immortality; rejoicing in bounty, agonizing in wrong, and triumphant in revenge. This was all. 'Then,' said He, 'Lo I come!' and we knew love, in that He laid down His life for us. 'By this we know love'<sup>1</sup>—love in its intense meaning. 'The splendour in the grass and fragrance in the flower' are the splendour and fragrance of a love beyond them. 'All thoughts, all passions, all delights,' are 'ministers' of a love around us. All citizenship, all brotherhood, all things for which men bless us, saying, 'Surely this is good,'—are manifestations of a love within us. All exaltations of our inward nature, in which we bless ourselves, saying, 'Surely this is great,'—are yearnings to a love above us. And thus, among the fragments of our fallen state, we may guess at love even as Plato guessed at God: but by this, and this only, can we *know* it—that Christ laid down His life for us. Has not love a deeper mystery than wisdom, and a more ineffable lustre than power? I believe it has. I venture to believe those beautiful and often quoted words 'God is love,' to be even less an expression of condescension towards the finite, than an

<sup>1</sup> *Ep. John* i. 5. The modifying expression of God which appears in our version is not in the Greek.

assertion of essential dignity in Him who is infinite.

But if my dream be true that Aeschylus might have turned to the subject before us in poetic instinct; and if in such a case—and here is no dream—its terror and its pathos would have shattered into weakness the strong Greek tongue, and caused the conscious chorus to tremble round the thymele,—how much more may I turn from it in the instinct of incompetence! In a manner I have done so. I have worn no shoes upon this holy ground: I have stood there, but have not walked. I have drawn no copy of the statue of this Great Pan,—but have caught its shadow,—shortened in the dawn of my imperfect knowledge, and distorted and broken by the unevenness of our earthly ground. I have written no work, but a suggestion. Nor has even so little been attempted without as deep a consciousness of weakness as the severest critic and the humblest Christian could desire to impress upon me. I have felt in the midst of my own thoughts upon my own theme, like Homer's 'children in a battle.'

The agents in this poem of imperfect form—a dramatic lyric, rather than a lyrical drama—are those mystic beings who are designated in Scripture the Seraphim. The subject has thus assumed a character of exaggerated difficulty, the full sense of which I have tried to express in my Epilogue. But my desire was, to gather some vision of the supreme spectacle under a less usual aspect—to glance at it, as dilated in seraphic eyes, and darkened and deepened by the near association with blessedness and Heaven. Are we not too apt to measure the depth of the Saviour's humiliation from the common estate of man, instead of from His own peculiar and primaevial one? To avoid which error I have endeavoured to count some steps of the ladder at Bethel—a very few steps, and as seen between the clouds.

And thus I have endeavoured to mark in my two Seraphic personages, distinctly and predominantly, that shrinking from, and repugnance to, evil, which in my weaker Seraph is expressed by *fear*, and in my stronger one by a more complex

passion; in order to contrast with such the voluntary debasement of Him who became lower than the angels, and touched in His own sinless being sin and sorrow and death. In my attempted production of such a contrast I have been true to at least my own idea of angelic excellence, as well as to that of His perfection. For one holiness differs from another holiness in glory. To recoil from evil is according to the stature of an angel; to subdue it is according to the infinitude of a God.

Of the poems which succeed *The Seraphim*, two ballads have been published in *The New Monthly Magazine*; one, the *Romance of the Ganges*, was written for the illustration of *Finden's Tableaux*, edited by Miss Mitford; and a few miscellaneous verses have appeared in the *Athenaeum*<sup>1</sup>.

Lest in any of these poems a dreaminess be observed upon, while a lawlessness is imputed to their writer, she is anxious to assure whatever reader may think it worth while to listen to her defence, that none of them were written with a lawless purpose. For instance, *The Poet's Vow* was intended to enforce a truth—that the creature cannot be isolated from the creature; and *The Romaunt of Margret*, a corresponding one, that the creature cannot be sustained by the creature. And if, indeed, the faintest character of poetry be granted to these compositions, it must be granted to them besides, that they contain a certain verity. For there is no greater fiction than that poetry is fiction. Poetry is essentially truthfulness; and the very incoherences of poetic dreaming are but the struggle and the strife to reach the True in the Unknown. 'If you please to call it but a dream,' says Cowley, 'I shall not take it ill; because the father of poets tells us, even dreams, too, are from God'<sup>2</sup>.

It was subsequent to my writing the poem called *The Virgin Mary to the Child Jesus* that I read in a selection of religious poetry, made by Mr. James

<sup>1</sup> These poems are printed in this edition under the heading 'Poems, 1838-50.'

<sup>2</sup> *Discourse by way of vision, concerning the government of Oliver Cromwell.*

Montgomery, a lyric of the sixteenth century upon the same subject<sup>1</sup>, together with an observation of the editor, that no living poet would be daring enough to approach it. As it has here been approached and attempted by the 'weak'st of many,' I would prove by this explanation, that consciously to impugn an opinion of Mr. Montgomery's, and to enter into rivalry with the bold simplicity of an ancient ballad, made no part of the daringness of which I confess myself guilty.

Nothing more is left to me to explain in relation to any particular poem of this collection. I need not defend them for being religious in their general character. The generation of such as held the doctrine of that critic who was *not* Longinus, and believed in the inadmissibility of religion into poetry, may have seen the end of vanity. That 'contemplative piety, or the intercourse between God and the human soul, cannot be poetical,' is true *if* it be true that the human soul having such intercourse is parted from its humanity, or *if* it be true that poetry is not expressive of that humanity's most exalted state. The first supposition is contradicted by man's own experience, and the latter by the testimony of Him who knoweth what is in man. For otherwise David's 'glory' would have awakened with no 'harp and lute'; and Isaiah's poetry of diction would have fallen in ashes from his lips, beneath the fire which cleansed them.

To any less reverent objection I would not willingly reply. 'An irreligious poet,' said Burns, meaning an undevotional one, 'is a monster.' An irreligious poet, he might have said, is no poet at all. The gravitation of poetry is upwards. The poetic wing, if it move, ascends. What did even the heathen Greeks—Homer, Aeschylus, Sophocles, Pindar? Sublimely, because born poets, darkly, because born of Adam and unrenewed in Christ, their spirits wandered like the rushing chariots and winged horses, black and white, of their brother-poet Plato<sup>2</sup>, through the

universe of Deity, seeking if haply they might find Him: and as that universe closed around the seekers, not with the transparency in which it flowed first from His hand, but opaquely, as double-dyed with the transgression of its sons,—they felt though they could not discern the God beyond, and used the gesture though ignorant of the language of worshipping. The blind eagle missed the sun, but soared towards its sphere. Shall the blind eagle soar—and the seeing eagle peck chaff? Surely it should be the gladness and the gratitude of such as are poets among us, that in turning towards the beautiful, they may behold the true face of God.

The disparaging speeches of prefaces are not proverbial for their real humility. I remember smiling over a preface of Pomfret, which intimates that *he* might hope for readers, as even Quarles and Wither found them! He does not add in words,—perhaps he did in thought, '*Fortunati nimium!*'

Without disparaging speeches, and yet with a self-distrust amounting to emotion, I offer to the public, and for the first time in my own name, these poems, which were not written because there is a public, but because they were thought and felt, and perhaps under some of the constraint referred to by Wither himself—for he *has* readers!

Those that only sip,  
Or but even their fingers dip  
In that sacred fount (poor elves!)  
Of that brood will show themselves:  
Yea, in hope to get them fauce,  
*They will speak though to their shame.*

May the omen be averted!

I assume no power of art, except that power of love towards it which has remained with me from my childhood until now. In the power of such a love, and in the event of my life being prolonged, I would fain hope to write hereafter better verses; but I never can feel more intensely than at this moment—nor can it be needful that any should—the sublime uses of poetry, and the solemn responsibilities of the poet.

LONDON, 1838.

<sup>1</sup> The coincidence consists merely of the choice of subject; the mode of treating it being wholly different.

<sup>2</sup> See his *Phaedrus*.

# THE SERAPHIM

I look for Angels' songs, and hear Him cry.—GILES FLETCHER.

## PART THE FIRST

[*It is the time of the Crucifixion; and the angels of heaven have departed towards the earth, except the two seraphim, Ador the Strong and ZERAH the Bright One. The place is the outer side of the shut heavenly gate.*]

*Ador.* O SERAPH, pause no more.  
Beside this gate of heaven we stand alone.

*Zerah.* Of heaven!

*Ador.* Our brother hosts are gone—

*Zerah.* Are gone before.

*Ador.* And the golden harps the angels bore

To help the songs of their desire,  
Still burning from their hands of fire,  
Lie without touch or tone

Upon the glass-sea shore.

*Zerah.* Silent upon the glass-sea shore!

*Ador.* There the Shadow from the throne

Formless with infinity

Hovers o'er the crystal sea;

Awfuller than light derived,

And red with those primaeval heats

Whereby all life has lived.

*Zerah.* Our visible God, our heavenly seats!

*Ador.* Beneath us sinks the pomp angelical,

Cherub and seraph, powers and virtues, all,—

The roar of whose descent has died  
To a still sound, as thunder into rain.

Immeasurable space spreads magnified

With that thick life, along the plane  
The worlds slid out on. What a fall

And eddy of wings innumerable,  
crossed

By trailing curls that have not lost  
The glitter of the God-smile shed

On every prostrate angel's head!  
What gleaming up of hands that

fling

Their homage in retorted rays,  
From high instinct of worship-  
ping,

And habitude of praise.

*Zerah.* Rapidly they drop below us.

Pointed palm and wing and hair

Indistinguishable show us

Only pulses in the air

Throbbing with a fiery beat,

As if a new creation heard

Some divine and plastic word,

And trembling at its new-found being,

Awakened at our feet.

*Ador.* Zerah, do not wait for seeing.

His voice, His, that thrills us so

As we our harpstrings, uttered *Go*,

*Behold the Holy in His woe.*

And all are gone, save thee and—

*Zerah.* Thee!

*Ador.* I stood the nearest to the throne

In hierarchical degree,

What time the Voice said *Go*!

And whether I was moved alone

By the storm-pathos of the tone

Which swept through heaven the alien name of *woe*,

Or whether the subtle glory broke

Through my strong and shielding wings,

Bearing to my finite essence

Incapacious of their presence,

Infinite imaginings,

None knoweth save the Throned who spoke;

But I, who at creation stood upright

And heard the God-breath move

Shaping the words that lightened, 'Be there light,'

Nor trembled but with love,

Now fell down shudderingly,

My face upon the pavement whence I had towered,

As if in mine immortal overpowered

By God's eternity.

*Zerah.* Let me wait!—let me wait!—

*Ador.* Nay, gaze not backward through the gate.

God fills our heaven with God's own  
solitude

Till all the pavements glow,  
His Godhead being no more subdued  
By itself, to glories low

Which seraphs can sustain.

What if thou, in gazing so,  
Shouldst behold but only one  
Attribute, the veil undone—

Even that to which we dare to press  
Nearest, for its gentleness—  
Aye, His love!

How the deep ecstatic pain  
Thy being's strength would capture!  
Without language for the rapture,

Without music strong to come  
And set the adoration free,

For ever, ever, wouldst thou be  
Amid the general chorus dumb,  
God-stricken to seraphic agony!—

Or, brother, what if on thine eyes  
In vision bare should rise  
The life-fount whence His hand did  
gather

With solitary force  
Our immortalities!

Straightway how thine own would  
wither,

Falter like a human breath,  
And shrink into a point like death,

By gazing on its source!—  
My words have imaged dread.  
Meekly hast thou bent thine head,  
And dropt thy wings in languish-  
ment;

Overclouding foot and face,  
As if God's throne were eminent  
Before thee, in the place.

Yet not—not so,  
O loving spirit and meek, dost thou  
fulfil

The supreme Will.  
Not for obeisance but obedience,  
Give motion to thy wings. Depart from  
hence.

The voice said 'Go!'

*Zerah.* Beloved, I depart.

His will is as a spirit within my spirit,  
A portion of the being I inherit.  
His will is mine obedience. I resemble  
A flame all undefiled though it tremble;  
I go and tremble. Love me, O beloved!  
O thou, who stronger art,

And standest ever near the Infinite,  
Pale with the light of Light!  
Love me, beloved! me, more newly made,  
More feeble, more afraid;

And let me hear with mine thy pinions  
moved,  
As close and gentle as the loving are,  
That love being near, heaven may not  
seem so far.

*Ador.* I am near thee and I love thee.  
Were I loveless, from thee gone,  
Love is round, beneath, above thee,  
God, the omnipresent One.  
Spread the wing, and lift the brow  
Well-beloved, what fearest thou?

*Zerah.* I fear, I fear—

*Ador.* What fear?

*Zerah.* The fear of earth.

*Ador.* Of earth, the God-created and  
God-praised

In the hour of birth?  
Where every night the moon in light  
Doth lead the waters silver-faced?  
Where every day the sun doth lay  
A rapture to the heart of all

The leafy and reeded pastoral,  
As if the joyous shout which burst  
From angel lips to see him first,  
Had left a silent echo in his ray?

*Zerah.* Of earth—the God-created and  
God-curst,

Where man is, and the thorn:  
Where sun and moon have borne  
No light to souls forlorn:

Where Eden's tree of life no more up-  
rears

Its spiral leaves and fruitage, but instead  
The yew-tree bows its melancholy head,  
And all the undergrasses kills and seres.

*Ador.* Of earth the weak,  
Made and unmade!

Where men that faint, do strive for  
crowns that fade?

Where, having won the profit which  
they seek,

They lie beside the sceptre and the gold  
With fleshless hands that cannot wield  
or hold,

And the stars shine in their unwinking  
eyes!

*Zerah.* Of earth the bold,

Where the blind matter wrings  
An awful potency out of impotence,

Bowing the spiritual things

To the things of sense.

Where the human will replies

With aye and no,

Because the human pulse is quick or slow.

Where Love succumbs to Change,

With only his own memories, for revenge.

And the fearful mystery—

*Ador.* Called Death?

*Zerah.* Nay, death is fearful,—but who saith

‘To die,’ is comprehensible.

What’s fearfuller, thou knowest well,

Though the utterance be not for thee,

Lest it blanch thy lips from glory—

Aye! the cursèd thing that moved

A shadow of ill, long time ago,

Across our heaven’s own shining floor,

And when it vanished, some who were

On thrones of holy empire there,

Did reign — were seen — were — never more.

Come nearer, O beloved!

*Ador.* I am near thee. Didst thou bear thee

Ever to this earth?

*Zerah.* Before.

When thrilling from His hand along

Its lustrous path with spheric song

The earth was deathless, sorrowless.

Unfearing, then, pure feet might press

The grasses brightening with their feet,

For God’s own voice did mix its sound

In a solemn confluence oft

With the rivers’ flowing round,

And the life-tree’s waving soft.

Beautiful new earth and strange!

*Ador.* Hast thou seen it since—the change?

*Zerah.* Nay, or wherefore should I fear To look upon it now?

I have beheld the ruined things

Only in depicturings

Of angels from an earthly mission,—

Strong one, even upon thy brow,

When, with task completed, given

Back to us in that transition,

I have beheld thee silent stand,

Abstracted in the seraph band,

Without a smile in heaven.

*Ador.* Then thou wast not one of those

Whom the loving Father chose

In visionary pomp to sweep

O’er Judaea’s grassy places,

O’er the shepherds and the sheep,

Though thou art so tender?—dimming

All the stars except one star

With their brighter kinder faces,

And using heaven’s own tune in hymning,

While deep response from earth’s own mountains ran,

‘Peace upon earth—goodwill to man.’

*Zerah.* ‘Glory to God.’—I said amen afar.

And those who from that earthly mission are,

Within mine ears have told

That the seven everlasting Spirits did hold

With such a sweet and prodigal constraint

The meaning yet the mystery of the song,

What time they sang it, on their natures strong,

That, gazing down on earth’s dark steadfastness

And speaking the new peace in promises,

The love and pity made their voices faint

Into the low and tender music, keeping

The place in heaven, of what on earth is weeping.

*Ador.* Peace upon earth. Come down to it.

*Zerah.* Ah me!

I hear thereof uncomprehendingly.

Peace where the tempest, where the sighing is,

And worship of the idol, ‘stead of His?

*Ador.* Yea, peace, where He is.

*Zerah.* He!

Say it again.

*Ador.* Where He is.

*Zerah.* Can it be

That earth retains a tree

Whose leaves, like Eden foliage, can be swayed

By the breathing of His voice, nor shrink and fade?

*Ador.* There is a tree!—it hath no leaf  
nor root ;

Upon it hangs a curse for all its fruit :  
Its shadow on His head is laid.

For He, the crownèd Son,  
Has left His crown and throne,  
Walks earth in Adam's clay,  
Eve's snake to bruise and slay—

*Zerah.* Walks earth in clay?

*Ador.* And walking in the clay which  
He created,

He through it shall touch death.  
What do I utter? what conceive? did  
breath

Of demon howl it in a blasphemy?

Or was it mine own voice, informed,  
- dilated

By the seven confluent Spirits!—Speak  
—answer me!

*Who* said man's victim was his Deity?

*Zerah.* Beloved, beloved, the word  
came forth from thee.

Thine eyes are rolling a tempestuous light  
Above, below, around,

As putting thunder-questions without  
cloud,

Reverberate without sound,  
To universal nature's depth and height.  
The tremor of an inexpressive thought  
Too self-amazed to shape itself aloud,  
O'erruns the awful curving of thy lips ;

And while thine hands are stretched  
above,

As newly they had caught  
Some lightning from the Throne, or  
showed the Lord

Some retributive sword,  
Thy brows do alternate with wild eclipse  
And radiance, with contrasted wrath  
and love,

As God had called thee to a seraph's  
part,

With a man's quailing heart. -

*Ador.* O heart—O heart of man !

O ta'en from human clay,  
To be no seraph's but Jehovah's own!  
Made holy in the taking,  
And yet unseparate

From death's perpetual ban,  
And human feelings sad and passionate !  
Still subject to the treacherous forsaking  
Of other hearts, and its own steadfast  
pain !

O heart of man—of God ! which God  
has ta'en

From out the dust, with its humanity  
Mournful and weak yet innocent around  
it,

And bade its many pulses beating lie  
Beside that incommunicable stir  
Of Deity wherewith He interwound it.  
O man ! and is thy nature so defiled,  
That all that holy Heart's devout law-  
keeping,

And low pathetic beat in deserts wild,  
And gushings pitiful of tender weeping  
For traitors who consigned it to such  
woe—

That all could cleanse thee not, without  
the flow

Of blood, the life-blood — *His* — and  
streaming *so* ?

O earth the thundercleft, windshaken,  
where

The louder voice of 'blood and blood'  
doth rise,

Hast thou an altar for this sacrifice ?

O heaven—O vacant throne !

O crownèd hierarchies, that wear your  
crown

When His is put away !

Are ye unshamed that ye cannot dim  
Your alien brightness to be liker Him,—  
Assume a human passion, and down-lay  
Your sweet secureness for congenial  
fears,

And teach your cloudless ever-burning  
eyes

The mystery of His tears ?

*Zerah.* I am strong, I am strong.

Were I never to see my heaven again,  
I would wheel to earth like the  
tempest rain

Which sweeps there with an exult-  
ant sound

To lose its life as it reaches the  
ground.

I am strong, I am strong.

Away from mine inward vision swim  
The shining seats of my heavenly  
birth—

I see but His, I see but Him—  
The Maker's steps on His cruel earth.  
Will the bitter herbs of earth grow  
sweet

To me, as trodden by His feet ?

Will the vexed, accurst humanity,  
As worn by Him, begin to be  
A blessed, yea, a sacred thing,  
For love, and awe, and ministering?

I am strong, I am strong.  
By our angel ken shall we survey  
His loving smile through his woful  
clay?

I am swift, I am strong—  
The love is bearing me along.  
*Ador.* One love is bearing us along.

## PART THE SECOND

[*Mid-air, above Judaea. ADOR and ZERAH  
are a little apart from the visible Angelic  
Hosts.*]

*Ador.* BELOVED ! dost thou see ?—  
*Zerah.* Thee,—thee.

Thy burning eyes already are  
Grown wild and mournful as a star  
Whose occupation is for ay  
To look upon the place of clay  
Whereon thou lookest now.

The crown is fainting on thy brow  
To the likeness of a cloud,  
The forehead's self a little bowed  
From its aspect high and holy,  
As it would in meekness meet  
Some seraphic melancholy.

Thy very wings that lately flung  
An outline clear, do flicker here,  
And wear to each a shadow hung,  
Dropped across thy feet.

In these strange contrasting glooms  
Stagnant with the scent of tombs,  
Seraph faces, O my brother,  
Show awfully to one another.

*Ador.* Dost thou see ?  
*Zerah.* Even so—I see

Our empyreal company,  
Alone the memory of their brightness  
Left in them, as in thee.

The circle upon circle, tier on tier,  
Piling earth's hemisphere  
With heavenly infiniteness,  
Above us and around,

Straining the whole horizon like a bow !  
Their songful lips divorced from all sound,  
A darkness gliding down their silvery  
glances,—

Bowing their steadfast solemn counten-  
ances

As if they heard God speak, and could  
not glow.

*Ador.* Look downward ! dost thou see ?

*Zerah.* And wouldst thou press *that*  
vision on my words ?

Doth not Earth speak enough  
Of change and of undoing,  
Without a seraph's witness ! Oceans  
rough

With tempest, pastoral swards  
Displaced by fiery deserts, mountains  
ruing

The bolt fallen yesterday,  
That shake their piny heads, as who  
would say

'We are too beautiful for our decay'—  
Shall seraphs speak of these things ?  
Let alone

Earth, to her earthly moan.

*Voice of all things.* Is there no moan  
but hers ?

*Ador.* Hearst thou the attestation  
Of the roused Universe,  
Like a desert lion shaking  
Dews of silence from its mane ?  
With an irrepressive passion

Uprising at once,  
Rising up, and forsaking  
Its solemn state in the circle of suns,  
To attest the pain

Of Him who stands (O patience  
sweet !)

In His own hand-prints of creation,  
With human feet ?

*Voice of all things.* Is there no moan  
but ours ?

*Zerah.* Forms, Spaces, Motions wide,  
O meek, insensate things,  
O congregated matters ! who inherit,

Instead of vital powers,  
Impulsions God-supplied ;  
Instead of influent spirit,  
A clear informing beauty ;

Instead of creature-duty,  
Submission calm as rest !  
Lights, without feet or wings,  
In golden courses sliding !

Glooms, stagnantly subsiding,  
Whose lustrous heart away was prest  
Into the argent stars !

Ye crystal, firmamental bars,  
That hold the skyey waters free  
From tide or tempest's ecstasy !

Airs universal! thunders lorn,  
That wait your lightnings in cloud-  
cave

Hewn out by the winds! O brave  
And subtle elements! the Holy  
Hath charged me by your voice  
with folly!

Enough, the mystic arrow leaves its  
wound.

Return ye to your silences inborn,  
Or to your inarticulated sound.

*Ador.* Zerah.

*Zerah.* Wilt thou rebuke?

God hath rebuked me, brother.—I am  
weak.

*Ador.* Zerah, my brother Zerah!—  
could I speak

Of thee, 'twould be of love to thee.

*Zerah.* Thy look  
Is fixed on earth, as mine upon thy face.  
Where shall I see His?

I have thrown  
One look upon earth, but one,  
Over the blue mountain-lines,  
Over the forests of palms and pines,  
Over the harvest-lands golden,  
Over the valleys that fold in  
The gardens and vines—  
He is not there.

All these are unworthy  
Those footsteps to bear,  
Before which, bowing down  
I would fain quench the stars of my crown  
In the dark of the earthy.  
Where shall I see Him?

No reply?  
Hath language left thy lips, to place  
Its vocal in thine eye?

*Ador.* Ador! are we come  
To a double portent, that  
Dumb matter grows articulate  
And songful seraphs dumb?  
*Ador.* Ador!

*Ador.* I constrain  
The passion of my silence. None  
Of those places gazed upon  
Are gloomy enow to fit His pain.  
Unto Him, whose forming word  
Gave to Nature flower and sward,  
She hath given back again,  
For the myrtle, the thorn,

<sup>1</sup> His angels He charged with folly.—*Job*  
iv. 18.

For the sylvan calm, the human scorn.  
Still, still, reluctant seraph, gaze beneath!  
There is a city—

*Zerah.* Temple and tower,  
Palace and purple would droop like a  
flower,  
(Or a cloud at our breath)  
If He neared in His state  
The outermost gate.

*Ador.* Ah me, not so  
In the state of a King did the victim go!  
And Thou who hangest mute of speech  
'Twixt heaven and earth, with fore-  
head yet  
Stained by the bloody sweat,  
God! man! Thou hast forgone Thy  
throne in each!

*Zerah.* Thine eyes behold Him?

*Ador.* Yea, below.  
Track the gazing of mine eyes,  
Naming God within thine heart  
That its weakness may depart  
And the vision rise.

Seest thou yet, beloved?

*Zerah.* I see  
Beyond the city, crosses three,  
And mortals three that hang thereon,  
'Ghast and silent to the sun.  
Round them blacken and welter  
and press  
Staring multitudes, whose father  
Adam was, whose brows are dark  
With his Cain's corroded mark,  
Who curse with looks. Nay—let  
me rather

Turn unto the wilderness.

*Ador.* Turn not. God dwells with men.  
*Zerah.* Above

He dwells with angels, and they love.  
Can these love? With the living's pride  
They stare at those who die,—who hang  
in their sight and die. They bear the  
streak

Of the crosses' shadow, black not wide,  
To fall on their heads, as it swerves aside  
When the victims' pang  
Makes the dry wood creak.

*Ador.* The cross—the cross!

*Zerah.* A woman kneels  
The mid cross under,  
With white lips asunder,  
And motion on each.  
They throb, as she feels,

With a spasm, not a speech;  
And her lids, close as sleep,  
Are less calm, for the eyes  
Have made room there to weep  
Drop on drop—

*Ador.* Weep! Weep blood,  
All women, all men!  
He sweated it, He,  
For your pale womanhood  
And base manhood. Agree  
That these water-tears, then,  
Are vain, mocking like laughter!  
Weep blood!—Shall the flood  
Of salt curses, whose foam is the dark-  
ness, on roll

Forward, on from the strand of the  
storm-beaten years,  
And back from the rocks of the horrid  
hereafter,  
And up, in a coil, from the present's  
wrath-spring,  
Yea, down from the windows of heaven  
opening,—  
Deep calling to deep as they meet on  
His soul,—

And men weep only tears?  
*Zerah.* Little drops in the lapse!  
And yet, Ador, perhaps  
It is all that they can.  
Tears! the lovingest man  
Has no better bestowed  
Upon man.

*Ador.* Nor on God.

*Zerah.* Do all-givers need gifts?  
If the Giver said 'Give,' the first motion  
would slay  
Our Immortals, the echo would ruin away  
The same worlds which He made.  
Why, what angel uplifts  
Such a music, so clear,  
It may seem in God's ear  
Worth more than a woman's hoarse  
weeping? And thus,  
Pity tender as tears, I above thee would  
speak,  
Thou woman that weepest! weep un-  
scorned of us!  
I, the tearless and pure, am but loving  
and weak.

*Ador.* Speak low, my brother, low,—  
and not of love,  
Or human or angelic. Rather stand  
Before the throne of that Supreme above,

In whose infinitude the secrecies  
Of thine own being lie hid, and lift thine  
hand

Exultant, saying, 'Lord God, I am wise!'—  
Than utter *here*, 'I love.'

*Zerah.* And yet thine eyes  
Do utter it. They melt in tender light,  
The tears of heaven.

*Ador.* Of heaven. Ah me!

*Zerah.* Ador!

*Ador.* Say on.

*Zerah.* The crucified are three.  
Beloved, they are unlike.

*Ador.* Unlike.

*Zerah.* For one  
Is as a man who has sinned and still  
Doth wear the wicked will,  
The hard malign life-energy,  
Tossed outward, in the parting soul's  
disdain,  
On brow and lip that cannot change  
again.

*Ador.* And one—

*Zerah.* Has also sinned.  
And yet (O marvel!) doth the Spirit-wind  
Blow white those waters!—Death upon  
his face

Is rather shine than shade,  
A tender shine by looks beloved made.  
He seemeth dying in a quiet place,  
And less by iron wounds in hands and feet  
Than heart-broke by new joy too sudden  
and sweet.

*Ador.* And one!—

*Zerah.* And one—

*Ador.* Why dost thou pause?

*Zerah.* God! God!

Spirit of my spirit! who movest  
Through seraph veins in burning deity  
To light the quenchless pulses!—

*Ador.* But hast trod  
The depths of love in Thy peculiar nature,  
And not in any Thou hast made and lovest  
In narrow seraph hearts!—

*Zerah.* Above, Creator!  
Within, Upholder!

*Ador.* And below, below,  
The creature's and the upholden's sacri-  
fice!

*Zerah.* Why do I pause?—

*Ador.* There is a silentness  
That answers thee enow,—  
That, like a brazen sound

Excluding others, doth ensheathe us  
round,—

Hear it! It is not from the visible skies  
Though they are still,

Unconscious that their own dropped  
dews express

The light of heaven on every earthly hill.  
It is not from the hills, though calm and  
bare

They, since their first creation,  
Through midnight cloud or morning's  
glittering air

Or the deep deluge blindness, toward  
the place

Whence thrilled the mystic word's  
creative grace,

And whence again shall come

The word that uncreates,

Have lift their brows in voiceless ex-  
pectation.

It is not from the places that entomb  
Man's dead—though common Silence  
there dilates

Her soul to grand proportions, worthily  
To fill life's vacant room.

Not there—not there!

Not yet within those chambers lieth He,  
A dead One in His living world! His south  
And west winds blowing over earth and  
sea,

And not a breath on that creating Mouth.

But now,—a silence keeps

(Not death's, nor sleep's)

The lips whose whispered word

Might roll the thunders round rever-  
berated.

Silent art Thou, O my Lord,

Bowing down Thy stricken head!

Fearest Thou, a groan of Thine

Would make the pulse of Thy creation fail

As Thine own pulse!—would rend the veil

Of visible things, and let the flood

Of the unseen Light, the essential God,

Rush in to whelm the undivine?—

Thy silence, to my thinking, is as dread.

*Zerah.* O silence!

*Ador.* Doth it say to thee—the NAME,

Slow-learning seraph?

*Zerah.* I have learnt.

*Ador.* The flame

Perishes in thine eyes.

*Zerah.* He opened His,

And looked. I cannot bear—

*Ador.* Their agony?

*Zerah.* Their love. God's depth is in  
them. From His brows

White, terrible in meekness, didst thou  
see

The lifted eyes unclose?

He is God, seraph! Look no more on me,  
O God—I am not God.

*Ador.* The loving is  
Sublimed within them by the sorrowful.  
In heaven we could sustain them.

*Zerah.* Heaven is dull,  
Mine Ador, to man's earth. The light  
that burns

In fluent, refluxent motion

Along the crystal ocean;

The springing of the golden harps be-  
tween

The bowery wings, in fountains of sweet  
sound;

The winding, wandering music that re-  
turns

Upon itself, exultingly self-bound

In the great spheric round

Of everlasting praises;

The God-thoughts in our midst that  
intervene,

Visibly flashing from the supreme throne  
Full in seraphic faces

Till each astonishes the other, grown

More beautiful with worship and delight!

My heaven! my home of heaven! my  
infinite

Heaven-choirs! what are ye to this dust  
and death,

This cloud, this cold, these tears, this  
failing breath,

Where God's immortal love now issueth  
In this man's woe?

*Ador.* His eyes are very deep yet calm.

*Zerah.* No more

On me, Jehovah-man—

*Ador.* Calm-deep. They show

A passion which is tranquil. They are  
seeing

No earth, no heaven, no men that slay  
and curse,

No seraphs that adore;

Their gaze is on the invisible, the dread,  
The things we cannot view or think or  
speak,

Because we are too happy, or too weak,—  
The sea of ill, for which the universe,

With all its piled space, can find no shore,  
 With all its life, no living foot to tread!  
 But He, accomplished in Jehovah-being,  
     Sustains the gaze adown,  
     Conceives the vast despair,  
 And feels the billowy griefs come up to drown,  
 Nor fears, nor faints, nor fails, till all be finished.

*Zerah.* Thus, do I find Thee thus?  
 My undiminished  
 And undiminishable God!—my God!  
 The echoes are still tremulous along  
 The heavenly mountains, of the latest song

Thy manifested glory swept abroad  
 In rushing past our lips! they echo ay  
     ‘Creator, Thou art strong!—  
 Creator, Thou art blessed over all.’  
 By what new utterance shall I now recall,  
 Unteaching the heaven-echoes? Dare I say,

‘Creator, Thou art feeble than Thy work!  
 Creator, Thou art sadder than Thy creature!

A worm, and not a man,  
 Yea, no worm, but a curse!’—  
 I dare not so mine heavenly phrase reverse.

Albeit the piercing thorn and thistle-fork  
 (Whose seed disordered ran  
 From Eve’s hand trembling when the curse did reach her)

Be garnered darklier in Thy soul, the rod  
 That smites Thee never blossoming, and Thou

Grief-bearer for Thy world, with unkinged brow—

I leave to men their song of Ichabod.  
 I have an angel-tongue—I know but praise.

*Ador.* Hereafter shall the blood-bought captives raise  
 The passion-song of blood.

*Zerah.* And we, extend  
 Our holy vacant hands towards the Throne,  
 Crying ‘We have no music!’

*Ador.* Rather, blend  
 Both musics into one.  
 The sanctities and sanctified above

Shall each to each, with lifted looks serene,

Their shining faces lean,  
 And mix the adoring breath  
 And breathe the full thanksgiving.

*Zerah.* But the love—  
 The love, mine Ador!

*Ador.* Do we love not?  
*Zerah.* Yea,  
 But not as man shall! not with life for death,

New-throbbing through the startled being! not

With strange astonished smiles, that ever may

Gush passionate like tears and fill their place!

Nor yet with speechless memories of what Earth’s winters were, enverduring the green

Of every heavenly palm  
 Whose windless, shadeless calm

Moves only at the breath of the Unseen.  
 Oh, not with this blood on us—and this face!—

Still, haply, pale with sorrow that it bore  
 In our behalf, and tender evermore  
 With nature all our own, upon us gazing!—

Nor yet with these forgiving hands up-raising

Their unreproachful wounds, alone to bless!

Alas, Creator! shall we love Thee less  
 Than mortals shall?

*Ador.* Amen! so let it be.  
 We love in our proportion—to the bound

Thine infinite our finite set around,  
 And that is finitely,—Thou, infinite  
 And worthy infinite love! And our delight

Is watching the dear love poured out to Thee

From ever fuller chalice. Blessed they,  
 Who love Thee more than we do! blessed we,

Viewing that love which shall exceed even this,

And winning in the sight a double bliss,  
 For all so lost in love’s supremacy!

The bliss is better. Only on the sad  
 Cold earth there are who say  
 It seemeth better to be great than glad.

The bliss is better. Love Him more,

O man,

Than sinless seraphs can.

*Zerah.* Yea, love Him more.

*Voices of the angelic multitude.* Yea, more.

*Ador.* The loving word

Is caught by those from whom we stand apart.

For Silence hath no deepness in her heart  
Where love's low name low breathed  
would not be heard

By angels, clear as thunder.

*Angelic voices.* Love him more!

*Ador.* Sweet voices, swooning o'er

The music which ye make!

Albeit to love there were not ever  
given

A mournful sound when uttered out  
of heaven,

That angel-sadness ye would fitly  
take.

Of love be silent now! we gaze  
adown

Upon the incarnate Love who wears,  
no crown.

*Zerah.* No crown! the woe instead

Is heavy on His head,

Pressing inward on His brain

With a hot and clinging pain,

Till all tears are prest away,

And clear and calm His vision may

Peruse the black abyss.

No rod, no sceptre is

Holden in His fingers pale;

They close instead upon the nail,

Concealing the sharp dole—

Never stirring to put by

The fair hair peaked with blood,

Drooping forward from the rood

Helplessly, heavily,

On the cheek that waxeth colder,

Whiter ever,—and the shoulder

Where the government was laid.

His glory made the heavens afraid;

Will He not unearth this cross from  
its hole?

His pity makes His piteous state;

Will He be uncompassionate

Alone to His proper soul?

Yea, will He not lift up

His lips from the bitter cup,

His brows from the dreary weight,

His hand from the clenching cross,

Crying, 'My Father, give to Me  
Again the joy I had with Thee,  
Or ere this earth was made for loss?'—

No stir—no sound!

The love and woe being interwound

He cleaveth to the woe,

And putteth forth heaven's strength  
below—

To bear.

*Ador.* And that creates His anguish  
now,

Which made His glory there.

*Zerah.* Shall it indeed be so?

Awake, thou Earth! behold!

Thou, uttered forth of old

In all thy life-emotion,

In all thy vernal noises,

In the rollings of thine ocean,

Leaping founts, and rivers run-  
ning,—

In thy woods' prophetic heaving

Ere the rains a stroke have given,

In thy winds' exultant voices

When they feel the hills anear,

In the firmamental sunning,

And the tempest which rejoices

Thy full heart with an awful cheer!

Thou, uttered forth of old,

And with all thy music rolled

In a breath abroad

By the breathing God,—

Awake! He is here! behold!

Even thou—

beseems it good

To thy vacant vision dim,

That the deadly ruin should,

For thy sake, encompass Him?

That the Master-word should lie

A mere silence, while His own

Processive harmony,

The faintest echo of His lightest tone,  
Is sweeping in a choral triumph by?

Awake! emit a cry!

And say, albeit used

From Adam's ancient years

To falls of acrid tears,

To frequent sighs unloosed,

Caught back to press again

On bosoms zoned with pain—

To corse still and sullen

The shine and music dulling

With closed eyes and ears

That nothing sweet can enter,

Commoving thee no less  
 With that forced quietness  
 Than the earthquake in thy centre—  
 Thou hast not learnt to bear  
 This new divine despair!  
 These tears that sink into thee,  
 These dying eyes that view thee,  
 This dropping blood from lifted  
     rood,  
 They darken and undo thee!  
 Thou canst not, presently, sustain this  
     corse!  
 Cry, cry, thou hast not force!  
 Cry, thou wouldst fainer keep  
 Thy hopeless charnels deep,  
 Thyself a general tomb—  
 Where the first and the second Death  
 Sit gazing face to face  
 And mar each other's breath,  
 While silent bones through all the place  
 'Neath sun and moon do faintly glisten,  
 And seem to lie and listen  
 For the tramp of the coming Doom.  
 Is it not meet  
 That they who erst the Eden fruit did eat,  
 Should champ the ashes?  
 That they who wrapt them in the  
     thundercloud,  
 Should wear it as a shroud,  
 Perishing by its flashes?  
 That they who vexed the lion, should be  
     rent?  
 Cry, cry—'I will sustain my punish-  
     ment,  
 The sin being mine! but take away from  
     me  
 This visioned Dread—this Man—this  
     Deity.'

*The Earth.* I have groaned—I have  
 travailed—I am weary.  
 I am blind with mine own grief, and  
     cannot see,  
 As clear-eyed angels can, His agony,  
 And what I see I also can sustain,  
 Because His power protects me from  
     His pain.  
 I have groaned—I have travailed—I am  
     dreary,  
 Harkening the thick sobs of my child-  
     ren's heart.  
 How can I say 'Depart'  
 To that Atoner making calm and free?  
 Am I a God as He,

To lay down peace and power as will-  
     ingly?

*Ador.* He looked for some to pity.  
 There is none.

All pity is within Him, and not for Him.  
 His earth is iron under Him, and o'er Him  
     His skies are brass.

His seraphs cry 'Alas'  
 With hallelujah voice that cannot weep.  
 And man, for whom the dreadful work is  
     done—

*Scornful voices from the Earth.* If verily  
 this be the Eternal's son—

*Ador.* Thou hearest!—man is grateful!  
*Zerah.* Can I hear,

Nor darken into man and cease for ever  
 My seraph-smile to wear?

Was it for such,  
 It pleased Him to overleap  
 His glory with His love and sever  
 From the God-light and the throne  
 And all angels bowing down,  
 For whom His every look did touch  
 New notes of joy on the unworn  
     string

Of an eternal worshipping?  
 For such, He left His heaven?  
 There, though never bought by  
     blood

And tears, we gave Him gratitude!  
 We loved Him there, though unfor-  
     given!

*Ador.* The light is riven  
     Above, around,  
 And down in lurid fragments flung,  
 That catch the mountain-peak and stream  
     With momentary gleam,  
 Then perish in the water and the ground.  
 River and waterfall,  
 Forest and wilderness,  
 Mountain and city, are together wrung  
 Into one shape, and that is shapelessness;  
 The darkness stands for all.

*Zerah.* The pathos hath the day undone:  
 The death-look of His eyes  
     Hath overcome the sun,  
 And made it sicken in its narrow skies.

*Ador.* Is it to death? He dieth.  
*Zerah.* Through the dark  
 He still, He only, is discernible—  
 The naked hands and feet transfixed stark,  
 The countenance of patient anguish white,  
     Do make themselves a light

More dreadful than the glooms which  
round them dwell,  
And therein do they shine.

*Ador.* God! Father-God!  
Perpetual Radiance on the radiant  
throne!

Uplift the lids of inward Deity,  
Flashing abroad  
Thy burning Infinite!  
Light up this dark, where there is nought  
to see

Except the unimagined agony  
Upon the sinless forehead of the Son.

*Zerah.* God, tarry not! Behold, enow  
Hath He wandered as a stranger,  
Sorrowed as a victim. Thou

Appear for Him, O Father!

Appear for Him, Avenger!

Appear for Him, just One and holy One,  
For He is holy and just!

At once the darkness and dishonour  
rather

To the ragged jaws of hungry chaos rake,  
And hurl aback to ancient dust

These mortals that make blasphemies  
With their made breath! this earth and  
skies

That only grow a little dim,

Seeing their curse on Him!

But Him, of all forsaken,

Of creature and of brother,

Never wilt thou forsake!

Thy living and Thy loving cannot slacken  
Their firm essential hold upon each  
other—

And well Thou dost remember how His  
part

Was still to lie upon Thy breast and be  
Partaker of the light that dwelt in Thee  
Ere sun or seraph shone;

And how while silence trembled round  
the throne,

Thou countedst by the beatings of His  
heart

The moments of Thine own eternity!

Awaken,

O right Hand with the lightnings!  
Again gather

His glory to thy glory! What stranger,

What ill supreme in evil, can be thrust

Between the faithful Father and the Son?

Appear for Him, O Father!

Appear for Him, Avenger!

Appear for Him, just One and holy One,  
For He is holy and just.

*Ador.* Thy face, upturned toward the  
throne, is dark—

Thou hast no answer, *Zerah.*

*Zerah.* No reply,

O unforsaking Father?—

*Ador.* Hark!

Instead of downward voice, a cry

Is uttered from beneath.

*Zerah.* And by a sharper sound than  
death

Mine immortality is riven.

The heavy darkness which doth tent the  
sky

Floats backward as by a sudden wind—

But I see no light behind!

But I feel the farthest stars are all

Stricken and shaken,

And I know a shadow sad and broad

Doth fall—doth fall

On our vacant thrones in heaven.

*Voice from the Cross.* MY GOD, MY GOD,  
WHY HAST THOU ME FORSAKEN?

*The Earth.* Ah me, ah me, ah me! the  
dreadful why!

My sin is on Thee, sinless One! Thou art  
God-orphaned, for my burden on Thy  
head.

Dark sin, white innocence, endurance  
dread!

Be still, within your shrouds, my buried  
dead—

Nor work with this quick horror round  
mine heart!

*Zerah.* He hath forsaken Him. I  
perish—

*Ador.* Hold  
Upon His name! we perish not. Of old  
His will—

*Zerah.* I seek His will. Seek, seraphim!  
My God, my God! where is it? Doth  
that curse

Reverberates spare us, seraph or universe?

*He hath forsaken Him.*

*Ador.* He cannot fail.

*Angel Voices.* We faint, we droop—

Our love doth tremble like fear.

*Voices of Fallen Angels from the earth.*

Do we prevail?

Or are we lost?—Hath not the ill we did  
Been heretofore our good?

Is it not ill that One, all sinless, should

Hang heavy with all curses on a cross?  
Nathless, that cry!—With huddled faces  
hid

Within the empty graves which men did  
scoop

To hold more damned dead, we shudder  
through

What shall exalt us or undo,—  
Our triumph, or our loss.

*Voice from the Cross.* IT IS FINISHED.

*Zerah.* Hark, again!

Like a victor speaks the Slain.

*Angel Voices.* Finished be the trembling  
vain!

*Ador.* Upward, like a well-loved Son,  
Looketh He, the orphaned One.

*Angel Voices.* Finished is the mystic  
pain!

*Voices of Fallen Angels.* His deathly  
forehead at the word

Gleameth like a seraph sword.

*Angel Voices.* Finished is the demon  
reign!

*Ador.* His breath, as living God,  
createth,

His breath, as dying man, com-  
pleteth.

*Angel Voices.* Finished work His hands  
sustain!

*The Earth.* In mine ancient sepul-  
chres

Where my kings and prophets  
freeze,

Adam dead four thousand years,  
Unwakened by the universe's

Everlasting moan,  
Ay his ghastly silence, mocking—

Unwakened by his children's  
knocking

At his old sepulchral stone,  
'Adam, Adam, all this curse is

Thine and on us yet!—  
Unwakened by the ceaseless tears

Wherewith they made his cere-  
ment wet,

'Adam, must thy curse re-  
main?'—

Starts with sudden life, and hears  
Through the slow dripping of the

caverned eaves,—  
*Angel Voices.* Finished is his bane!

*Voice from the Cross.* FATHER! MY  
SPIRIT TO THINE HANDS IS GIVEN!

*Ador.* Hear the wailing winds that be  
By wings of unclean spirits made!

They, in that last look, surveyed  
The love they lost in losing heaven,

And passionately flee,—

With a desolate cry that cleaves  
The natural storms—though they are

lifting

God's strong cedar-roots like leaves,  
And the earthquake and the thunder,

Neither keeping either under,  
Roar and hurtle through the glooms!—

And a few pale stars are drifting

Past the Dark, to disappear,

What time, from the splitting tombs,

Gleamingly the Dead arise,

Viewing with their death-calmed eyes

The elemental strategies,

To witness, Victory is the Lord's.

Hear the wail o' the spirits! hear.

*Zerah.* I hear alone the memory of His  
words.

## EPILOGUE

### I

My song is done.

My voice that long hath faltered, shall  
be still.

Themystic darkness drops from Calvary's  
hill

Into the common light of this day's sun.

### II

I see no more Thy cross, O holy Slain!  
I hear no more the horror and the coil

Of the great world's turmoil,

Feeling thy countenance *too still*,—nor  
yell

Of demons sweeping past it to their prison.  
The skies, that turned to darkness with

Thy pain,

Make now a summer's day;

And on my changed ear that sabbath bell  
Records how CHRIST IS RISEN.

### III

And I—ah! what am I

To counterfeit, with faculty earth-  
darkened,

Seraphic brows of light,

And seraph language never used nor  
hearkened!

Ah me! what word that seraphs say,  
could come

From mouth so used to sighs—so soon  
to lie

Sighless, because then breathless, in the  
tomb?

Bright ministers of God and grace!—of  
grace

Because of God!—whether ye bow  
adown

In your own heaven, before the living  
face

Of Him who died, and deathless wears  
the crown—

Or whether at this hour ye haply are  
Anear, around me, hiding in the night

Of this permitted ignorance your light,  
This feebleness to spare,—

Forgive me, that mine earthly heart  
should dare

Shape images of unincarnate spirits,

And lay upon their burning lips a thought  
Cold with the weeping which mine earth  
„inherits.

And though ye find in such hoarse music,  
wrought

To copy yours, a cadence all the while  
Of sin and sorrow—only pitying

smile!—

Ye know to pity, well.

v

I too may haply smile another day

At the far recollection of this lay,

When God may call me in your midst to  
dwell,

To hear your most sweet music's miracle  
And see your wondrous faces. May it be!

For His remembered sake, the Slain on  
rood,

Who rolled His earthly garment red in  
blood

(Treading the wine-press) that the weak,  
like me,

Before His heavenly throne should walk  
in white.

# QUEEN ANNELIDA AND FALSE ARCITE<sup>1</sup>

## I

O THOU fierce God of armies, Mars the  
red,  
Who in thy frosty country callèd Thrace,  
Within thy grisly temples full of dread,  
Art honoured as the patron of that place,  
With the Bellona Pallas, full of grace!  
Be present; guide, sustain this song of  
mine,  
Beginning which, I cry toward thy  
shrine.

## II

For deep the hope is sunken in my mind,  
In piteous-hearted English to indite  
This story old, which I in Latin find,  
Of Queen Annelida and false Arcite:  
Since Time, whose rust can all things  
fret and bite,  
In fretting many a tale of equal fame,  
Hath from our memory nigh devoured  
this same.

## III

Thy favour, Polyhymnia, also deign,  
Who, in thy sisters' green Parnassian  
glade,  
By Helicon, not far from Cirrha's fane,  
Singest with voice memorial in the shade,  
Under the laurel which can never fade;  
Now grant my ship, that some smooth  
haven win her!  
I follow Statius first, and then Corinna.

## IV

When Theseus by a long and deathly war  
The hardy Scythian race had overcome,  
He, laurel-crownèd, in his gold-wrought  
car,  
Returning to his native city home,  
The blissful people for his pomp make  
room,

And throw their shouts up to the stars,  
and bring  
The general heart out for his honouring.

## V

Before the Duke, in sign of victory,  
The trumpets sound, and in his banner  
large  
Dilates the figure of Mars—and men may  
see,  
In token of glory, many a treasure charge,  
Many a bright helm, and many a spear  
and targe,  
Many a fresh knight, and many a blissful  
rout  
On horse and foot, in all the field about.

## VI

Hippolyte, his wife, the heroic queen  
Of Scythia, conqueress though con-  
quered,  
With Emily, her youthful sister sheen,  
Fair in a car of gold he with him led.  
The ground about her car she overspread  
With brightness from the beauty in her  
face,  
Which smiled forth largesses of love  
and grace.

## VII

Thus triumphing, and laurel-crownèd  
thus,  
In all the flower of Fortune's high pro-  
viding,  
I leave this noble prince, this Theseus,  
Toward the walls of Athens bravely  
riding,—  
And seek to bring in, without more  
abiding,  
Something of that whereof I'gan to write,  
Of fair Annelida and false Arcite.

<sup>1</sup> From *The Poems of Geoffrey Chaucer, Modernized*, 1841.

## VIII

Fierce Mars, who in his furious course  
 of ire,  
 The ancient wrath of Juno to fulfil,  
 Had set the nations' mutual hearts on fire  
 In Thebes and Argos, (so that each  
 would kill  
 Either with bloody spears,) grew never  
 still—  
 But rushed now here, now there,  
 among them both,  
 Till each was slain by each, they were  
 so wroth.

## IX

For when Parthenopæus and Tydeus  
 Had perished with Hippomedon,—also  
 Amphiaræus and proud Capaneus,—  
 And when the wretched Theban brethren  
 two  
 Were slain, and King Adrastus home  
 did go—  
 So desolate stood Thebes, her halls so  
 bare,  
 That no man's love could remedy his  
 care.

## X

And when the old man, Creon, 'gan  
 espy  
 How darkly the blood royal was brought  
 down,  
 He held the city in his tyranny,  
 And forced the nobles of that region  
 To be his friends and dwell within the  
 town;  
 Till half for love of him, and half for fear,  
 Those princely persons yielded, and  
 drew near,—

## XI

Among the rest the young Armenian  
 queen,  
 Annelida, was in that city living.  
 She was as beauteous as the sun was  
 sheen,  
 Her fame to distant lands such glory  
 giving,  
 That all men in the world had some  
 heart-striving  
 To look on her. No woman, sooth,  
 can be,  
 Though earth is rich in fairness, fair as  
 she.

## XII

Young was this queen, but twenty-  
 summers old,  
 Of middle stature, and such wondrous  
 beauty,  
 That Nature, self-delighted, did behold  
 A rare work in her—while, in steadfast  
 duty,  
 Lucretia and Penelope would suit ye  
 With a worse model—all things under-  
 stood,  
 She was, in short, most perfect fair and  
 good.

## XIII

The Theban knight eke, to give all their  
 due,  
 Was young, and therewithal a lusty  
 knight.  
 But he was double in love, and nothing  
 true,  
 Aye, subtler in that craft than any wight,  
 And with his cunning won this lady  
 bright;  
 So working on her simpleness of nature,  
 That she him trusted above every crea-  
 ture.

## XIV

What shall I say? She lovèd Arcite so,  
 That if at any hour he parted from her,  
 Her heart seemed ready anon to burst  
 in two;  
 For he with lowliness had overcome her:  
 She thought she knew the heart which  
 did foredoom her.  
 But he was false, and all that softness  
 feigning,—  
 I trow men need not *learn* such arts of  
 paining.

## XV

And ne'ertheless full mickle business  
 Had he, before he might his lady win,—  
 He swore that he should die of his  
 distress,  
 His brain would madden with the fire  
 within!  
 Alas, the while! for it was ruth and sin,  
 That she, sweet soul, upon his grief  
 should rue;  
 But little reckon false hearts as the true.

XVI

And she to Arcite so subjected her,  
That all she did or had seemed his of  
right :  
No creature in her house met smile or  
cheer,  
Further than would be pleasant to Arcite ;  
There was no lack whereby she did  
despite  
To his least will—for hers to his was  
bent,  
And all things which pleased him made  
her content.

XVII

No kind of letter to her fair hands came,  
Touching on love, from any kind of  
wight,  
But him she showed it ere she burned  
the same :  
So open was she, doing all she might,  
That nothing should be hidden from her  
knight,  
Lest he for any untruth should upbraid  
her,—  
The slave of his unspoken will she made  
her.

XVIII

He played his jealous fancies over her,  
And if he heard that any other man  
Spoke to her, would beseech her  
straight to swear  
— To each word—or the speaker had his  
ban ;  
And out of her sweet wits she almost ran  
For fear ; but all was fraud and flattery,  
Since without love he feignèd jealousy.

XIX

All which with so much sweetness  
suffered she,  
Whate'er he willed she thought the  
wisest thing ;  
And evermore she loved him tenderly,  
And did him honour as he were a king.  
Her heart was wedded to him with  
a ring,  
So eager to be faithful and intent,  
That wheresoe'er he wandered, there it  
went.

XX

When she would eat he stole away her  
thought,  
Till little thought for food, I ween, was  
kept ;  
And when a time for rest the midnight  
brought,  
She always mused upon him till she  
slept,—  
When he was absent, secretly she wept ;  
And thus lived Queen Annelida the fair,  
For false Arcite, who worked her this  
despair.

XXI

This false Arcite in his new-fangleness,  
Because so gentle were her ways and  
true,  
Took the less pleasure in her steadfast-  
ness,  
And saw another lady proud and new,  
And right anon he clad him in her  
hue ;  
I know not whether white, or red, or  
green,  
Betraying fair Annelida the Queen.

XXII

And yet it was no thing to wonder on,  
Though he were false—It is the way of  
man,  
(Since Lamech was, who flourished  
years ago,)  
To be in love as false as any can ;  
For he was the first father who began  
To love two ; and I trow, indeed, that he  
Invented tents as well as bigamy.

XXIII

And having so betrayed her, false Arcite  
Feigned more, that primal wrong to  
justify.  
A vicious horse will snort besides his  
bite ;  
And so he taunted her with treachery,  
Swearing he saw thro' her duplicity,  
And how she was not loving, but false-  
hearted—  
The perjured traitor swore thus, and  
departed.

## XXIV

Alas, alas, what heart could suffer it,  
 For ruth, the story of her grief to tell?  
 What thinker hath the cunning and the wit  
 To image it! what hearer, strength to dwell  
 A room's length off, while I rehearse the hell  
 Suffered by Queen Annelida the fair  
 For false Arcite, who worked her this  
 despair?

## XXV

She weepeth, waileth, swooneth piteously;  
 She falleth on the earth dead as a stone;  
 Her graceful limbs are cramped convulsively;  
 She speaketh out wild, as her wits were gone.  
 No colour, but an ashen paleness—none—  
 Touched cheek or lips; and no word shook their white,  
 But 'Mercy, cruel heart! mine own Arcite!'

## XXVI

Thus it continued, till she pinèd so,  
 And grew so weak, her feet no more could bear  
 Her body, languishing in ceaseless woe.  
 Whereof Arcite had neither ruth nor care—  
 His heart had put out new-green shoots elsewhere;  
 Therefore he deigned not on her grief to think,  
 And reckoned little, did she float or sink.

## XXVII

His fine new lady kept him in such narrow  
 Strict limit, by the bridle, at the end  
 O' the whip, he feared her least word as an arrow,—  
 Her threatening made him, as a bow, to bend,  
 And at her pleasure did he turn and wend;  
 Seeing she never granted to this lover  
 A single grace he could sing 'los' over.

## XXVIII

She drove him forth—she scarcely deigned to know  
 That he was servant to her ladyship:  
 But, lest he should be proud, she kept him low,  
 Nor paid his service from a smiling lip:  
 She sent him now to land, and now to ship;  
 And giving him all danger to his fill,  
 She thereby had him at her sovereign will.

## XXIX

Be taught of this, ye prudent women all,  
 Warned by Annelida and false Arcite:  
 Because she chose, himself, 'dear heart' to call  
 And be so meek, he loved her not aright.  
 The nature of man's heart is to delight  
 In something strange—moreover (may Heaven save  
 The wronged) the thing they cannot, they would have.

## XXX

Now turn we to Annelida again,  
 Who pinèd day by day in languishment.  
 But when she saw no comfort met her pain,  
 Weeping once in a woful unconstraint,  
 She set herself to fashion a complaint,  
 Which with her own pale hand she 'gan to write,  
 And sent it to her lover, to Arcite.

## THE COMPLAINT OF ANNELIDA TO FALSE ARCITE

## I

The sword of sorrow, whetted sharp for me  
 On false delight, with point of memory  
 Stabbed so mine heart, bliss-bare and black of hue,  
 That all to dread is turned my dance's glee,  
 My face's beauty to despondency—  
 For nothing it availeth to be true—  
 And, whosoever is so, she shall rue  
 Obeying love, and cleaving faithfully  
 Alway to one, and changing for no new.

II

I ought to know it well as any wight,  
For I loved one with all my heart and  
    might,  
More than myself a hundred-thousand  
    fold,  
And called him my heart's dear life, my  
    knight,  
And was all his, as far as it was right;  
His gladness did my blitheness make of  
    old,  
And in his least disease my death was  
    told;  
Who, on his side, had plighted lovers'  
    plight,  
Me, evermore, his lady and love to hold.

III

Now is he false—alas, alas!—although  
Unwronged! and acting such a ruthless  
    part,  
That with a little word he will not deign  
To bring the peace back to my mournful  
    heart.  
Drawn in, and caught up by another's  
    art,  
Right as he will, he laugheth at my pain;  
While I—I cannot my weak heart re-  
    strain  
From loving him—still, ay; yet none I  
    know  
To whom of all this grief I can complain.

IV

Shall I complain (ah, piteous and harsh  
    sound!)  
Unto my foe, who gave mine heart a  
    wound,  
And still desireth that the harm be more?  
Now certes, if I sought the whole earth  
    round,  
No other help, no better leach were  
    found!  
My destiny hath shaped it so of yore—  
I would not other medicine, nor yet lore.  
I would be ever where I once was bound;  
And what I said, would say for evermore.

V

Alas! and where is gone your gentillesse?  
Where gone your pleasant words, your  
    humbleness?

Where your devotion full of reverent fear,  
Your patient loyalty, your busy address  
To me, whom once you called nothing less  
Than mistress, sovereign lady, i' the  
    sphere  
O' the world? Ah me! no word, no look  
    of cheer,  
Will you vouchsafe upon my heaviness!  
Alas your love! I bought it all too dear.

VI

Now certes, sweet, howe'er you be  
The cause so, and so causelessly,  
Of this my mortal agony,  
Your reason should amend the failing!  
Your friend, your true love, do you flee,  
Who never in time nor yet degree  
Grieved you: so may the all-knowing  
    He  
Save my lorn soul from future wailing.

VII

Because I was so plain, Arcite,  
In all my doings, your delight,  
Seeking in all things, where I might  
In honour,—meek and kind and free;  
Therefore you do me such despite.  
Alas! howe'er through cruelty  
My heart with sorrow's sword you  
    smite,  
You cannot kill its love.—Ah me!

VIII

Ah, my sweet foe, why do you so  
    For shame?  
Think you that praise, in sooth, will raise  
    Your name,  
Loving anew, and being untrue  
    For ay?  
Thus casting down your manhood's crown  
    In blame,  
And working me adversity,  
    The same  
Who loves you most—(O God, Thou  
    know'st!)  
    Always!  
Yet turn again—be fair and plain  
    Some day;  
And then shall this, that seems amiss,  
    Be game,  
All being forgiven, while yet from heaven  
    I stay.

## IX

Behold, dear heart, I write this to obtain  
Some knowledge, whether I should pray  
or 'plain :  
Which way is best to force you to be true ?  
For either I must have you in my chain,  
Or you, sweet, with the death must part  
us twain ;  
There is no mean, no other way more  
new :  
And, that heaven's mercy on my soul  
may rue  
And let you slay me outright with this  
pain,  
The whiteness in my cheeks may prove  
to you.

## X

For hitherto mine own death have I  
sought ;  
Myself I murder with my secret thought,  
In sorrow and ruth of your unkindnesses !  
I weep, I wail, I fast—all helpeth nought,  
I flee all joy (I mean the name of aught),  
I flee all company, all mirthfulness—  
Why, who can make her boast of more  
distress  
Than I?—To such a plight you have me  
brought,  
Guiltless (I need no witness) ne'ertheless.

## XI

Shall I go pray and wail my womanhood ?  
Compared to such a deed, death's self  
were good.  
What ! ask for mercy, and guiltless—  
where's the need ?  
And if I wailed my life so,—that you  
would  
Care nothing, is less feared than under-  
stood :  
And if mine oath of love I dared to plead  
In mine excuse,—your scorn would be  
its need.  
Ah, love ! it giveth flowers instead of  
seed—  
Full long ago I might have taken heed.

## XII

And though I had you back to-morrow  
again,  
I might as well hold April from the rain

As hold you to the vows you vowed me  
last.  
Maker of all things, and truth's sovereign,  
Where is the truth of man, who hath it  
slain,  
That she who loveth him should find  
him fast  
As in a tempest is a rotten mast ?  
Is that a *faine* beast which is ever fain  
To flee us when restraint and fear are  
past ?

## XIII

Now mercy, sweet, if I mis-say :—  
Have I said aught is wrong to-day ?  
I do not know—my wit's astray—  
I fare as doth the song of one who  
weepeth ;  
For now I 'plain, and now I play—  
I am so mazed, I die away—  
Arcite, you have the key for ay  
Of all my world, and all the good it  
keepeth.

## XIV

And in this world there is not one  
Who walketh with a sadder moan,  
And bears more grief than I have done ;  
And if light slumbers overcome me,  
Methinks your image, in the glory  
Of skyey azure, stands before me,  
Revowing the old love you bore me,  
And praying for new mercy from me.

## XV

Through the long night, this wondrous  
sight,  
Bear I,  
Which haunteth still, the daylight, till  
I die :  
But nought of this, your heart, I wis,  
Can reach.  
Mine eyes down-pour, they nevermore  
Are dry.  
While to your ruth, and eke your truth,  
I cry—  
But, weladay, too far be they  
To fetch.  
Thus destiny is holding me—  
Ah, wretch !  
And when I fain would break the chain,  
And try—  
Faieth my wit (so weak is it)  
With speech.

XVI

Therefore I end thus, since my hope is  
o'er—  
I give all up both now and evermore;  
And in the balance ne'er again will lay  
My safety, nor be studious in love-lore.  
But like the swan who, as I heard of yore,  
Singeth life's penance on his deathly day,  
So I sing here my life and woes away,—  
Aye, how you, cruel Arcite, wounded  
sore,  
With memory's point, your poor Anne-  
lida.

XVII

After Annelida, the woful queen,  
Had written in her own hand in this  
wise,  
With ghastly face, less pale than white,  
I ween,  
She fell a-swooning; then she 'gan  
arise,  
And unto Mars voweth a sacrifice  
Within the temple, with a sorrowful  
bearing,  
And in such phrase as meets your present  
hearing.

# POEMS, 1838—50

## PREFACE TO THE EDITION OF 1844

THE collection here offered to the public consists of Poems which have been written in the interim between the period of the publication of my *Seraphim* and the present; variously coloured, or perhaps shadowed, by the life of which they are the natural expression, and, with the exception of a few contributions to English or American periodicals, are printed now for the first time.

As the first poem of this collection, the *Drama of Exile*, is the longest and most important work (to me!) which I ever trusted into the current of publication, I may be pardoned for entreating the reader's attention to the fact, that I decided on publishing it after considerable hesitation and doubt. The subject of the Drama rather fastened on me than was chosen; and the form, approaching the model of the Greek tragedy, shaped itself under my hand, rather by force of pleasure than of design. But when the excitement of composition had subsided I felt afraid of my position. My subject was the new and strange experience of the fallen humanity, as it went forth from Paradise into the wilderness; with a peculiar reference to Eve's allotted grief, which, considering that self-sacrifice belonged to her womanhood, and the consciousness of originating the Fall to her offence, appeared to me imperfectly apprehended hitherto, and more expressible by a woman than a man. There was room, at least, for lyrical emotion in those first steps into the wilderness,—in that first sense of desolation after wrath,—in that first audible gathering of the recriminating 'groan of the whole creation,'—in that first darkening of the hills from the recoiling feet of angels,—and in that first silence of the voice of God. And I took pleasure in driving in, like a pile, stroke upon stroke, the idea of EXILE,—admitting Lucifer as an extreme Adam, to represent the

ultimate tendencies of sin and loss,—that it might be strong to bear up the contrary idea of the Heavenly love and purity. But when all was done I felt afraid, as I said before, of my position. I had promised my own prudence to shut close the gates of Eden between Milton and myself, so that none might say I dared to walk in his footsteps. He should be within, I thought, with his Adam and Eve unfallen or falling,—and I, without, with my EXILES,—I also an exile! It would not do. The subject, and his glory covering it, swept through the gates, and I stood full in it, against my will, and contrary to my vow, till I shrank back fearing, almost desponding; hesitating to venture even a passing association with our great poet before the face of the public. Whether at last I took courage for the venture by a sudden revival of that love of manuscript which should be classed by moral philosophers among the natural affections, or by the encouraging voice of a dear friend, it is not interesting to the reader to inquire. Neither could the fact affect the question; since I bear, of course, my own responsibilities. For the rest, Milton is too high, and I am too low, to render it necessary for me to disavow any rash emulation of his divine faculty on his own ground; while enough individuality will be granted, I hope, to my poem, to rescue me from that imputation of plagiarism which should be too servile a thing for every sincere thinker. After all, and at the worst, I have only attempted, in respect to Milton, what the Greek dramatists achieved lawfully in respect to Homer. They constructed dramas on Trojan ground; they raised on the buskin and even clasped with the sock, the feet of Homeric heroes; yet they neither imitated their Homer nor emasculated him. The Agamemnon of Aeschylus, who died in the bath, did no

harm to, nor suffered any harm from, the Agamemnon of Homer who bearded Achilles. To this analogy—the more favourable to me from the obvious exception in it, that Homer's subject was his own possibly by creation, whereas Milton's was his own by illustration only—I appeal. To this analogy—not to this comparison, be it understood—I appeal. For the analogy of the stronger may apply to the weaker; and the reader may have patience with the weakest while she suggests the application.

On a graver point I must take leave to touch, in further reference to my dramatic poem. The divine Saviour is represented in vision towards the close, speaking and transfigured; and it has been hinted to me that the introduction may give offence in quarters where I should be most reluctant to give any. A reproach of the same class, relating to the frequent recurrence of a Great Name in my pages, has already filled me with regret. How shall I answer these things? Frankly, in any case. When the old mysteries represented the Holiest Being in a rude familiar fashion, and the people gazed on, with the faith of children in their earnest eyes, the critics of a succeeding age, who rejoiced in Congreve, cried out 'profane.' Yet Andreini's mystery suggested Milton's epic; and Milton, the most reverent of poets, doubting whether to throw his work into the epic form or the dramatic, left, on the latter basis, a rough ground-plan, in which his intention of introducing the 'Heavenly Love' among the persons of his drama is extant to the present day. But the tendency of the present day is to sunder the daily life from the spiritual creed,—to separate the worshipping from the acting man,—and by no means to 'live by faith.' There is a feeling abroad which appears to me (I say it with deference) nearer to superstition than to religion, that there should be no touching of holy vessels except by consecrated fingers, nor any naming of holy names except in consecrated places. As if life were not a continual sacrament to man, since Christ brake the daily bread of it in His hands! As if the name of God did

not build a church, by the very naming of it! As if the word God were not, everywhere in His creation, and at every moment in His eternity, an appropriate word! As if it could be uttered unfitly, if devoutly! I appeal on these points, which I will not argue, from the conventions of the Christian to his devout heart; and I beseech him generously to believe of me that I have done that in reverence from which, through reverence, he might have abstained; and that where he might have been driven to silence by the principle of adoration, I, by the very same principle, have been hurried into speech.

It should have been observed in another place,—the fact, however, being sufficiently obvious throughout the drama,—that the time is from the evening into the night. If it should be objected that I have lengthened my twilight too much for the East, I might hasten to answer that we know nothing of the length of mornings or evenings before the Flood, and that I cannot, for my own part, believe in an Eden without the longest of purple twilights. The evening, ערב, of Genesis signifies a 'mingling,' and approaches the meaning of our 'twilight' analytically. Apart from which considerations, my 'exiles' are surrounded, in the scene described, by supernatural appearances; and the shadows that approach them are not only of the night.

The next longest poem to the *Drama of Exile*, in the collection, is the *Vision of Poets*, in which I have endeavoured to indicate the necessary relations of genius to suffering and self-sacrifice. In the eyes of the living generation, the poet is at once a richer and poorer man than he used to be; he wears better broadcloth, but speaks no more oracles: and the evil of this social incrustation over a great idea is eating deeper and more fatally into our literature than either readers or writers may apprehend fully. I have attempted to express in this poem my view of the mission of the poet, of the self-abnegation implied in it, of the great work involved in it, of the duty and glory of what Balzac has beautifully and truly called 'la patience angélique du génie';

and of the obvious truth, above all, that if knowledge is power, suffering should be acceptable as a part of knowledge. It is enough to say of the other poems, that scarcely one of them is unambitious of an object and a significance.

Since my *Seraphim* was received by the public with more kindness than its writer had counted on, I dare not rely on having put away the faults with which that volume abounded and was mildly reproached. Something indeed I may hope to have retrieved, because some progress in mind and in art every active thinker and honest writer must consciously or unconsciously make, with the progress of existence and experience: and, in some sort—since ‘we learn in suffering what we teach in song,’—my songs may be fitter to teach. But if it were not presumptuous language on the lips of one to whom life is more than usually uncertain, my favourite wish for this work would be, that it be received by the public as a step in the right track, towards a future indication of more value and acceptability. I would fain do better—and I feel as if I might do better: I aspire to do better. It is no new form of the nympholepsy of poetry, that my ideal should fly before me: and if I cry out too hopefully at

sight of the white vesture receding between the cypresses, let me be blamed gently if justly. In any case, while my poems are full of faults—as I go forward to my critics and confess—they have my heart and life in them: they are not empty shells. If it must be said of me that I have contributed immemorable verses to the many rejected by the age, it cannot at least be said that I have done so in a light and irresponsible spirit. Poetry has been as serious a thing to me as life itself; and life has been a very serious thing: there has been no playing at skittles for me in either. I never mistook pleasure for the final cause of poetry; nor leisure, for the hour of the poet. I have done my work, so far, as work—not as mere hand and head work, apart from the personal being, but as the completest expression of that being to which I could attain; and as work I offer it to the public—feeling its shortcomings more deeply than any of my readers, because measured from the height of my aspiration, but feeling also that the reverence and sincerity with which the work was done should give it some protection with the reverent and sincere.

LONDON, 50 WIMPOLE STREET, 1844.

## ADVERTISEMENT TO THE EDITION OF 1850

THIS edition, including my earlier and later writings, I have endeavoured to render as little unworthy as possible of the indulgence of the public. Several poems I would willingly have withdrawn, if it were not almost impossible to extricate what has been once caught and involved in the machinery of the press. The alternative is a request to the generous reader that he may use the weakness of those earlier verses, which no subsequent revision has succeeded in strengthening, less as a reproach to the writer, than as a means of marking some progress in her other attempts. One early failure, a translation of the *Prometheus* of Aeschylus—which, though happily free of the current of publication, may be

remembered against me by a few of my personal friends—I have replaced by an entirely new version, made for them and my conscience, in expiation of a sin of my youth, with the sincerest application of my mature mind. This collection includes, also, various poems hitherto unprinted, which I am glad to have the present opportunity of throwing behind me, so as to leave clear the path before, towards better aims and ends . . . may I hope? . . . than any which are attained here<sup>1</sup>.

FLORENCE, January 1850.

<sup>1</sup> Three additional pieces were added in the fourth edition, 1856 (from which the ensuing Poems are printed)—‘A Denial,’ ‘Proof and Disproof,’ ‘Question and Answer.’

# A DRAMA OF EXILE

SCENE.—*The outer side of the gate of Eden shut fast with cloud, from the depth of which revolves a sword of fire self-moved. ADAM and EVE are seen in the distance flying along the glare.*

LUCIFER, alone.

REJOICE in the clefts of Gehenna,  
My exiled, my host!  
Earth has exiles as hopeless as when a  
Heaven's empire was lost.

Through the seams of her shaken founda-  
tions,

Smoke up in great joy!  
With the smoke of your fierce exultations  
Deform and destroy!  
Smoke up with your lurid revenges,  
And darken the face  
Of the white heavens and taunt them  
with changes

From glory and grace.  
We, in falling, while destiny strangles,  
Pull down with us all.  
Let them look to the rest of their angels!  
Who's safe from a fall?

He saves not. Where's Adam? Can  
pardon

Requicken that sod?  
Unkinged is the King of the Garden,  
The image of God.

Other exiles are cast out of Eden,—  
More curse has been hurled.

Come up, O my locusts, and feed in  
The green of the world.

Come up! we have conquered by evil.  
Good reigns not alone.

I prevail now, and, angel or devil,  
Inherit a throne.

[*In sudden apparition a watch of in-  
numerable angels, rank above rank,  
slopes up from around the gate to the  
zenith. The angel GABRIEL descends.*

Luc. Hail Gabriel, the keeper of the  
gate!

Now that the fruit is plucked, prince  
Gabriel,

I hold that Eden is impregnable  
Under thy keeping.

Gab. Angel of the sin,  
Such as thou standest,—pale in the drear  
light

Which rounds the rebel's work with  
Maker's wrath,—

Thou shalt be an Idea to all souls,  
A monumental melancholy gloom  
Seen down all ages, whence to mark  
despair

And measure out the distances from good.  
Go from us straightway.

Luc. Wherefore?

Gab. Lucifer,  
Thy last step in this place trod sorrow  
up.

Recoil before that sorrow, if not this  
sword.

Luc. Angels are in the world—where-  
fore not I?

Exiles are in the world—wherefore not I?  
The cursed are in the world—wherefore  
not I?

Gab. Depart.

Luc. And where's the logic of  
'depart'?

Our lady Eve had half been satisfied  
To obey her Maker, if I had not learnt  
To fix my postulate better. Dost thou  
dream

Of guarding some monopoly in heaven  
Instead of earth? Why I can dream with  
thee

To the length of thy wings.

Gab. I do not dream.  
This is not Heaven, even in a dream, nor  
earth,

As earth was once, first breathed among  
the stars,

Articulate glory from the mouth divine,  
To which the myriad spheres thrilled  
audibly

Touched like a lute-string, and the sons  
of God

Said AMEN, singing it. I know that this  
I earth not new created but new cursed—

This, Eden's gate not opened but built up  
With a final cloud of sunset. Do I dream!

Alas, not so! this is the Eden lost  
By Lucifer the serpent! this the sword

(This sword alive with justice and with fire!)

That smote upon the forehead, Lucifer  
The angel. Wherefore, angel, go—depart—

Enough is sinned and suffered.

*Luc.* By no means.  
Here's a brave earth to sin and suffer on.  
It holds fast still—it cracks not under  
curse;

It holds like mine immortal. Presently  
We'll sow it thick enough with graves  
as green

Or greener certes, than its knowledge-  
tree—

We'll have the cypress for the tree of life,  
More eminent for shadow :—for the rest  
We'll build it dark with towns and  
pyramids,

And temples, if it please you :—we'll  
have feasts

And funerals also, merrymakes and  
wars,

Till blood and wine shall mix and run  
along

Right o'er the edges. And good Gabriel,  
(Ye like that word in Heaven!) I too  
have strength—

Strength to behold Him and not worship  
Him,

Strength to fall from Him and not cry  
on Him,

Strength to be in the universe and yet  
Neither God nor His servant. The red  
sign

Burnt on my forehead, which you taunt  
me with,

Is God's sign that it bows not unto God,  
The potter's mark upon his work, to show  
It rings well to the striker. I and the  
earth

Can bear more curse.

*Gab.* O miserable earth,  
O ruined angel!

*Luc.* Well, and if it be!  
I chose this ruin; I elected it  
Of my will, not of service. What I do,  
I do volitional, not obedient,  
And overtop thy crown with my despair.  
My sorrow crowns me. Get thee back  
to Heaven,

And leave me to the earth which is mine  
own

In virtue of her ruin, as I hers

In virtue of my revolt! turn thou from  
both

That bright, impassive, passive angel-  
hood,

And spare to read us backward any more  
Of the spent hallelujahs.

*Gab.* Spirit of scorn,  
I might say, of unreason! I might say,  
That who despairs, acts; that who acts,  
connives

With God's relations set in time and  
space;

That who elects, assumes a something  
good

Which God made possible; that who  
lives, obeys

The law of a Life-maker . . .

*Luc.* Let it pass.  
No more, thou Gabriel! What if I stand up  
And strike my brow against the crystalline  
Roofing the creatures,—shall I say, for  
that,

My stature is too high for me to stand,—  
Henceforward I must sit? Sit thou.

*Gab.* I kneel.

*Luc.* A heavenly answer. Get thee  
to thy Heaven,

And leave my earth to me.

*Gab.* Through Heaven and earth  
God's will moves freely, and I follow it,  
As colour follows light. He overflows  
The firmamental walls with deity,  
Therefore with love; His lightnings go  
abroad,

His pity may do so, His angels must,  
Whene'er He gives them charges.

*Luc.* Verily,  
I and my demons, who are spirits of scorn,  
Might hold this charge of standing with  
a sword

'Twixt man and his inheritance, as well  
As the benignant angel of you all.

*Gab.* Thou speakest in the shadow of  
thy change.

If thou hadst gazed upon the face of God  
This morning for a moment, thou hadst  
known

That only pity fitly can chastise.  
Hate but avenges.

*Luc.* As it is, I know  
Something of pity. When I reeled in  
Heaven,

And my sword grew too heavy for my grasp,  
 Stabbing through matter, which it could not pierce  
 So much as the first shell of,—toward the throne;  
 When I fell back, down,—staring up as I fell,—  
 The lightnings holding open my scathed lids,  
 And that thought of the infinite of God,  
 Hurl'd after to precipitate descent;  
 When countless angel faces still and stern  
 Pressed out upon me from the level heavens  
 Adown the abysmal spaces, and I fell  
 Trampled down by your stillness, and struck blind  
 By the sight within your eyes,—'twas then I knew  
 How ye could pity, my kind angelhood!  
*Gab.* Alas, discrowned one, by the truth in me  
 Which God keeps in me, I would give away  
 All—save that truth and His love keeping it,—  
 To lead thee home again into the light  
 And hear thy voice chant with the morning stars,  
 When their rays tremble round them with much song  
 Sung in more gladness!  
*Luc.* Sing, my Morning Star!  
 Last beautiful, last heavenly, that I loved!  
 If I could drench thy golden locks with tears,  
 What were it to this angel?  
*Gab.* What love is.  
 And now I have named God.  
*Luc.* Yet Gabriel,  
 By the lie in me which I keep myself,  
 Thou'rt a false swearer. Were it otherwise,  
 What dost thou here, vouchsafing tender thoughts  
 To that earth-angel or earth-demon—which,  
 Thou and I have not solved the problem yet  
 Enough to argue,—that fallen Adam there,—

That red-clay and a breath! who must, forsooth,  
 Live in a new apocalypse of sense,  
 With beauty and music waving in his trees  
 And running in his rivers, to make glad  
 His soul made perfect?—is it not for hope,  
 A hope within thee deeper than thy truth,  
 Of finally conducting him and his  
 To fill the vacant thrones of me and mine,  
 Which affront Heaven with their vacuity?  
*Gab.* Angel, there are no vacant thrones in Heaven  
 To suit thy empty words. Glory and life  
 Fulfil their own depletions; and if God  
 Sighed you far from Him, His next breath drew in  
 A compensating splendour up the vast,  
 Flushing the starry arteries.  
*Luc.* With a change!  
 So, let the vacant thrones and gardens too  
 Fill as may please you!—and be pitiful,  
 As ye translate that word, to the de-throned  
 And exiled, man or angel. The fact stands,  
 That I, the rebel, the cast out and down,  
 Am here and will not go; while there, along  
 The light to which ye flash the desert out,  
 Flies your adopted Adam, your red-clay  
 In two kinds, both being flawed. Why,  
 what is this?  
 Whose work is this? Whose hand was in the work?  
 Against whose hand? In this last strife,  
 methinks,  
 I am not a fallen angel!  
*Gab.* Dost thou know  
 Aught of those exiles?  
*Luc.* Aye: I know they have fled  
 Silent all day along the wilderness:  
 I know they wear, for burden on their backs,  
 The thought of a shut gate of Paradise,  
 And faces of the marshalled cherubim  
 Shining against, not for them; and I know  
 They dare not look in one another's face,—  
 As if each were a cherub!  
*Gab.* Dost thou know  
 Aught of their future?  
*Luc.* Only as much as this:

That evil will increase and multiply  
Without a benediction.

*Gab.* Nothing more?

*Luc.* Why so the angels taunt! What  
should be more?

*Gab.* God is more.

*Luc.* Proving what?

*Gab.* That He is God,  
And capable of saving. Lucifer,  
I charge thee by the solitude He kept  
Ere He created,—leave the earth to God!

*Luc.* My foot is on the earth, firm as  
my sin.

*Gab.* I charge thee by the memory of  
Heaven  
Ere any sin was done,—leave earth to  
God!

*Luc.* My sin is on the earth, to reign  
thereon.

*Gab.* I charge thee by the choral song  
we sang,  
When up against the white shore of our  
feet,  
The depths of the creation swelled and  
brake,—  
And the new worlds, the beaded foam  
and flower  
Of all that coil, roared outward into space  
On thunder-edges,—leave the earth to  
God!

*Luc.* My woe is on the earth, to curse  
thereby.

*Gab.* I charge thee by that mournful  
Morning Star  
Which trembles . . .

*Luc.* Enough spoken. As the pine  
In norland forest drops its weight of  
snows

By a night's growth, so, growing toward  
my ends,

I drop thy counsels. Farewell, Gabriel!  
Watch out thy service; I achieve my will.  
And peradventure in the after years,  
When thoughtful men shall bend their  
spacious brows

Upon the storm and strife seen every-  
where

To ruffle their smooth manhood and  
break up

With lurid lights of intermittent hope  
Their human fear and wrong,—they  
may discern

The heart of a lost angel in the earth.

# CHORUS OF EDEN SPIRITS

(*Chanting from paradise, while ADAM and  
EVE fly across the Sword-glare*).

Hearken, oh hearken! let your souls  
behind you

Turn, gently moved!  
Our voices feel along the Dread to find you,  
O lost, beloved!

Through the thick-shielded and strong-  
marshalled angels,  
They press and pierce:

Our requiems follow fast on our evan-  
gels,—

Voice throbs in verse.  
We are but orphaned spirits left in Eden  
A time ago.

God gave us golden cups, and we were  
bidden

To feed you so.  
But now our right hand hath no cup  
remaining,

No work to do,  
The mystic hydromel is spilt, and stain-  
ing

The whole earth through.  
Most ineradicable stains, for showing  
(Not interlused!)

That brighter colours were the world's  
foregoing,  
Than shall be used.

Hearken, oh hearken! ye shall hearken  
surely

For years and years,  
The noise beside you, dripping coldly,  
purely,  
Of spirits' tears.

The yearning to a beautiful denied you,  
Shall strain your powers.

Ideal sweetnesses shall over-glide you,  
Resumed from ours.

In all your music, our pathetic minor  
Your ears shall cross;

And all good gifts shall mind you of  
diviner,  
With sense of loss.

We shall be near you in your poet-  
languages

And wild extremes,  
What time ye vex the desert with vain  
angers,

Or mock with dreams.

And when upon you, weary after roaming,  
 Death's seal is put,  
 By the foregone ye shall discern the  
 coming,  
 Through eyelids shut.

*Spirits of the trees.*

Hark! the Eden trees are stirring,  
 Soft and solemn in your hearing!  
 Oak and linden, palm and fir,  
 Tamarisk and juniper,  
 Each still throbbing in vibration  
 Since that crowning of creation  
 When the God-breath spake abroad,  
*Let us make man like to God!*  
 And the pine stood quivering  
 As the awful word went by,  
 Like a vibrant music-string  
 Stretched from mountain-peak to sky.  
 And the platan did expand  
 Slow and gradual, branch and head;  
 And the cedar's strong black shade  
 Fluttered brokenly and grand.  
 Grove and wood were swept aslant  
 In emotion jubilant.

*Voice of the same, but softer.*

Which divine impulsion cleaves  
 In dim movements to the leaves  
 Dropt and lifted, dropt and lifted  
 In the sunlight greenly sifted,—  
 In the sunlight and the moonlight  
 Greenly sifted through the trees.  
 Ever wave the Eden trees  
 In the nightlight and the noonlight,  
 With a ruffling of green branches  
 Shaded off to resonances,  
 Never stirred by rain or breeze.

Fare ye well, farewell!  
 The sylvan sounds, no longer audible,  
 Expire at Eden's door.  
 Each footstep of your treading  
 Treads out some murmur which ye  
 heard before.

Farewell! the trees of Eden  
 Ye shall hear nevermore.

*River-spirits.*

Hark! the flow of the four rivers—  
 Hark the flow!  
 How the silence round you shivers,  
 While our voices through it go,  
 Cold and clear.

*A softer voice.*

Think a little, while ye hear,  
 Of the banks

Where the willows and the deer  
 Crowd in intermingled ranks,  
 As if all would drink at once  
 Where the living water runs!—  
 Of the fishes' golden edges  
 Flashing in and out the sedges;  
 Of the swans on silver thrones,  
 Floating down the winding streams  
 With impassive eyes turned shoreward  
 And a chant of undertones,—  
 And the lotus leaning forward  
 To help them into dreams.

Fare ye well, farewell!  
 The river-sounds, no longer audible,  
 Expire at Eden's door.

Each footstep of your treading  
 Treads out some murmur which ye  
 heard before.

Farewell! the streams of Eden,  
 Ye shall hear nevermore.

*Bird-spirit.*

I am the nearest nightingale  
 That singeth in Eden after you;  
 And I am singing loud and true,  
 And sweet,—I do not fail.  
 I sit upon a cypress bough,  
 Close to the gate, and I fling my song  
 Over the gate and through the mail  
 Of the warden angels marshalled  
 strong,—

Over the gate and after you!  
 And the warden angels let it pass,  
 Because the poor brown bird, alas,  
 Sings in the garden, sweet and true.  
 And I build my song of high pure notes,  
 Note over note, height over height,  
 Till I strike the arch of the Infinite,  
 And I bridge abysmal agonies  
 With strong, clear calms of har-  
 monies,—

And something abides, and something  
 floats,

In the song which I sing after you.

Fare ye well, farewell!  
 The creature-sounds, no longer audible,  
 Expire at Eden's door.

Each footstep of your treading  
 Treads out some cadence which ye  
 heard before.

Farewell! the birds of Eden,  
Ye shall hear nevermore.

*Flower-spirits.*

We linger, we linger,  
The last of the throng,  
Like the tones of a singer  
Who loves his own song.  
We are spirit-aromas  
Of blossom and bloom.  
We call your thoughts home as  
Ye breathe our perfume,—  
To the amaranth's splendour  
Afire on the slopes;  
To the lily-bells tender,  
And grey heliotropes;  
To the poppy-plains keeping  
Such dream-breath and blee  
That the angels there stepping  
Grew whiter to see:  
To the nook, set with moly,  
Ye jested one day in,  
Till your smile waxed too holy  
And left your lips praying:  
To the rose in the bower-place,  
That dripped o'er you sleeping;  
To the asphodel flower-place,  
Ye walked ankle-deep in!  
We pluck at your raiment,  
We stroke down your hair,  
We faint in our lament  
And pine into air.  
Fare ye well, farewell!  
The Eden scents, no longer sensible,  
Expire at Eden's door.  
Each footstep of your treading  
Treads out some fragrance which ye  
knew before.  
Farewell! the flowers of Eden,  
Ye shall smell nevermore.

[*There is silence. ADAM and EVE fly on, and never look back. Only a colossal shadow, as of the dark Angel passing quickly, is cast upon the Sword-glare.*]

SCENE.—*The extremity of the Sword-glare.*

Adam. Pausing a moment on this  
outer edge  
Where the supernal sword-glare cuts in  
light  
The dark exterior desert,—hast thou  
strength,

Beloved, to look behind us to the gate?  
Eve. Have I not strength to look up  
to thy face?

Adam. We need be strong: yon spec-  
tacle of cloud

Which seals the gate up to the final doom,  
Is God's seal manifest. There seem to lie  
A hundred thunders in it, dark and dead;  
The unmolten lightnings vein it motion-  
less;

And, outward from its depth, the self-  
moved sword

Swings slow its awful gnomon of red fire  
From side to side, in pendulous horror  
slow,

Across the stagnant, ghastly glare thrown  
flat

On the intermediate ground from that to  
this.

The angelic hosts, the archangelic pomps,  
Thrones, dominations, principedoms, rank  
on rank,

Rising sublimely to the feet of God,  
On either side and overhead the gate,  
Show like a glittering and sustained  
smoke

Drawn to an apex. That their faces shine  
Betwixt the solemn clasping of their  
wings

Clasped high to a silver point above  
their heads,—

We only guess from hence, and not dis-  
cern.

Eve. Though we were near enough  
to see them shine,

The shadow on thy face was awfuller,  
To me, at least,—to me—than all their  
light.

Adam. What is this, Eve! thou  
dropp'st heavily—

In a heap earthward, and thy body heaves  
Under the golden floodings of thine hair!

Eve. O Adam, Adam! by that name  
of Eve—

Thine Eve, thy life—which suits me  
little now,

Seeing that I now confess myself thy  
death

And thine undoer, as the snake was  
mine,—

I do adjure thee, put me straight away,  
Together with my name. Sweet, punish  
me!

O Love, be just! and, ere we pass beyond  
The light cast outward by the fiery sword,  
Into the dark which earth must be to us,  
Bruise my head with thy foot,—as the  
curse said

My seed shall the first tempter's!  
strike with curse,

As God struck in the garden! and as HE,  
Being satisfied with justice and with  
wrath,

Did roll His thunder gentler at the  
close,—

Thou, peradventure, mayst at last recoil  
To some soft need of mercy. Strike, my  
lord!

I, also, after tempting, writhe on the  
ground,

And I would feed on ashes from thine  
hand,

As suits me, O my tempted!

*Adam.* My beloved,  
Mine Eve and life—I have no other name  
For thee or for the sun than what ye are,  
My utter life and light! If we have fallen,  
It is that we have sinned,—we: God is  
just;

And, since His curse doth comprehend  
us both,

It must be that His balance holds the  
weights

Of first and last sin on a level. What!  
Shall I who had not virtue to stand straight  
Among the hills of Eden, here assume  
To mend the justice of the perfect God,  
By piling up a curse upon His curse,  
Against thee— thee—

*Eve.* For so, perchance, thy God  
Might take thee into grace for scorning me;  
Thy wrath against the sinner giving proof  
Of inward abrogation of the sin.

And so, the blessed angels might come  
down

And walk with thee as erst,—I think  
they would,—

Because I was not near to make them sad  
Or soil the rustling of their innocence.

*Adam.* They know me. I am deepest  
in the guilt,

If last in the transgression.

*Eve.* Thou!

*Adam.* If God,  
Who gave the right and joyance of the  
world

Both unto thee and me,—gave thee to me.  
The best gift last, the last sin was the  
worst,

Which sinned against more complement  
of gifts

And grace of giving. God! I render back  
Strong benediction and perpetual praise  
From mortal feeble lips (as incense-  
smoke,

Out of a little censer, may fill heaven),  
That Thou, in striking my benumbed  
hands

And forcing them to drop all other boons  
Of beauty and dominion and delight,—  
Hast left this well-beloved Eve, this life  
Within life, this best gift between their  
palms,

In gracious compensation!

*Eve.* Is it thy voice!  
Or some saluting angel's—calling home  
My feet into the garden?

*Adam.* O my God!  
I, standing here between the glory and  
dark,—

The glory of thy wrath projected forth  
From Eden's wall, the dark of our distress  
Which settles a step off in that drear  
world—

Lift up to Thee the hands from whence  
hath fallen

Only creation's sceptre,—thanking Thee  
That rather Thou hast cast me out with *her*  
Than left me lorn of her in paradise,  
With angel looks and angel songs around  
To show the absence of her eyes and voice,  
And make society full desertness  
Without her use in comfort!

*Eve.* Where is loss!  
Am I in Eden? can another speak  
Mine own love's tongue?

*Adam.* Because with *her*, I stand  
Upright, as far as can be in this fall,  
And look away from heaven which doth  
accuse,

And look away from earth which doth  
convict,  
Into her face, and crown my discrowned  
brow

Out of her love, and put the thought of her  
Around me, for an Eden full of birds,  
And lift her body up—thus—to my heart,  
And with my lips upon her lips,—thus,  
thus,—

Do quicken and sublimiate my mortal  
breath

Which cannot climb against the grave's  
steep sides

But overtops this grief!

*Eve.*

I am renewed.

My eyes grow with the light which is in  
thine;

The silence of my heart is full of sound.  
Hold me up—so! Because I comprehend  
This human love, I shall not be afraid  
Of any human death; and yet because  
I know this strength of love, I seem to  
know

Death's strength by that same sign.

Kiss on my lips,

Toshut the door close on my rising soul,—

Lest it pass outwards in astonishment

And leave thee lonely.

*Adam.*

Yet thou liest, Eve,  
Bent heavily on thyself across mine arm,  
Thy face flat to the sky.

*Eve.*

Aye! and the tears  
Running, as it might seem, my life from  
me,

They run so fast and warm. Let me lie so,  
And weep so, as if in a dream or prayer,  
Unfastening, clasp by clasp, the hard,  
tight thought

Which clipped my heart and showed me  
evermore

Loathed of thy justice as I loathe the  
snake,

And as the pure ones loathe our sin.

To-day,

All day, beloved, as we fled across

This desolating radiance cast by swords  
Not suns,—my lips prayed soundless to  
myself,

Striking against each other—'O Lord  
God!'

('Twass so I prayed) 'I ask Thee by my sin,  
And by thy curse, and by thy blameless  
heavens,

Make dreadful haste to hide me from  
thy face

And from the face of my beloved here  
For whom I am no helpmeet, quick away  
Into the new dark mystery of death;

I will lie still there, I will make no plaint,  
I will not sigh, nor sob, nor speak a word,  
Nor struggle to come back beneath the  
sun

Where peradventure I might sin anew  
Against Thy mercy and his pleasure.

Death,

O death, whate'er it be, is good enough  
For such as I am.—While for Adam

here

No voice shall say again, in heaven or  
earth,

*It is not good for him to be alone.'*

*Adam.* And was it good for such  
a prayer to pass,

My unkind Eve, betwixt our mutual lives?  
If I am exiled, must I be bereaved?

*Eve.* 'Twas an ill prayer: it shall be  
prayed no more;

And God did use it like a foolishness,  
Giving no answer. Now my heart has  
grown

Too high and strong for such a foolish  
prayer;

Love makes it strong: and since I was  
the first

In the transgression, with a steady foot  
I will be first to tread from this sword-  
glare

Into the outer darkness of the waste,—  
And thus I do it.

*Adam.*

Thus I follow thee,  
As erewhile in the sin.—What sounds!  
what sounds!

I feel a music which comes straight from  
Heaven,

As tender as a watering dew.

*Eve.*

I think

That angels—not those guarding Para-  
dise,—

But the love-angels, who came erst to us,  
And when we said 'God,' fainted un-  
awares

Back from our mortal presence unto God,  
(As if He drew them inward in a breath)  
His name being heard of them,—I think  
that they

With sliding voices lean from heavenly  
towers,

Invisible but gracious. Hark—how soft!

CHORUS OF INVISIBLE ANGELS.

*Faint and tender.*

Mortal man and woman,

Go upon your travel!

Heaven assist the Human

Smoothly to unravel

All that web of pain  
Wherein ye are holden.  
Do ye know our voices  
Chanting down the Golden?  
Do ye guess our choice is,  
Being un beholden,  
To be hearkened by you yet again?

This pure door of opal  
God hath shut between us,—  
Us, his shining people,  
You, who once have seen us  
And are blinded new!  
Yet, across the doorway,  
Past the silence reaching,  
Farewells evermore may,  
Blessing in the teaching,  
Glide from us to you.

*First semichorus.*

Think how erst your Eden,  
Day on day succeeding,  
With our presence glowed.  
Wecame as if the Heavens were bowed  
To a milder music rare.  
Ye saw us in our solemn treading,  
Treading down the steps of cloud,  
While our wings, outspreading  
Double calms of whiteness,  
Dropped superfluous brightness  
Down from stair to stair.

*Second semichorus.*

Or oft, abrupt though tender,  
While ye gazed on space,  
We flashed our angel-splendour  
In either human face.  
With mystic lilies in our hands,  
From the atmospheric bands  
Breaking with a sudden grace,  
We took you unaware!  
While our feet struck glories  
Outward, smooth and fair,  
Which we stood on floorwise,  
Platformed in mid air.

*First semichorus.*

Or oft, when Heaven-descended,  
Stood we in your wondering sight  
In a mute apocalypse!  
With dumb vibrations on our lips  
From hosannas ended,  
And grand half-vanishings  
Of the empyreal things  
Within our eyes belated,

Till the heavenly Infinite  
Falling off from the Created,  
Left our inward contemplation  
Opened into ministration.

*Chorus.*

Then upon our axle turning  
Of great joy to sympathy,  
We sang out the morning  
Broadening up the sky.  
Or we drew  
Our music through

The noontide's hush and heat and shine,  
Informed with our intense Divine!  
Interrupted vital notes  
Palpitating hither, thither,  
Burning out into the ether,  
Sensible like fiery motes.

Or, whenever twilight drifted  
Through the cedar masses,  
The globed sun we lifted,  
Trailing purple, trailing gold  
Out between the passes  
Of the mountains manifold,  
To anthems slowly sung!  
While he, weary, half in swoon  
For joy to hear our climbing tune  
Transpierce the stars' concentric rings,—  
The burden of his glory flung  
In broken lights upon our wings.

[*The chant dies away confusedly, and  
LUCIFER appears.*]

*Luc.* Now may all fruits be pleasant  
to thy lips,  
Beautiful Eve! The times have somewhat  
changed  
Since thou and I had talk beneath a tree,  
Albeit ye are not gods yet.

*Eve.* Adam! hold  
My right hand strongly. It is Lucifer—  
And we have love to lose.

*Adam.* I' the name of God,  
Go apart from us, O thou Lucifer!  
And leave us to the desert thou hast  
made  
Out of thy treason. Bring no serpent-  
slime  
Athwart this path kept holy to our tears,  
Or we may curse thee with their bitter-  
ness.

*Luc.* Curse freely! curses thicken.  
Why, this Eve

Who thought me once part worthy of  
her ear

And somewhat wiser than the other  
beasts,—

Drawing together her large globes of eyes,  
The light of which is throbbing in and out  
Their steadfast continuity of gaze,—

Knots her fair eyebrows in so hard a knot,  
And down from her white heights of  
womanhood

Looks on me so amazed,—I scarce should  
fear

To wager such an apple as she plucked,  
Against one riper from the tree of life,  
That she could curse too—as a woman  
may—

Smooth in the vowels.

*Eve.* So—speak wickedly!  
I like it best so. Let thy words be  
wounds,—

For, so, I shall not fear thy power to hurt.  
Trench on the forms of good by open ill—  
For, so, I shall wax strong and grand  
with scorn,

Scorning myself for ever trusting thee  
As far as thinking, ere a snake ate dust,  
He could speak wisdom.

*Luc.* Our new gods, it seems,  
Deal more in thunders than in courtesies.  
And, sooth, mine own Olympus, which  
anon

I shall build up to loud-voiced imagery  
From all the wandering visions of the  
world,

May show worse railing than our lady Eve  
Pours o'er the rounding of her argent arm.  
But why should this be? Adam pardoned  
Eve.

*Adam.* Adam loved Eve. Jehovah  
pardon both.

*Eve.* Adam forgave Eve — because  
loving Eve.

*Luc.* So, well. Yet Adam was un-  
done of Eve,

As both were by the snake. Therefore  
forgive,

In like wise, fellow-temptress, the poor  
snake—

Who stung there, not so poorly! [*Aside.*  
*Eve.* Hold thy wrath,

Beloved Adam! let me answer him;  
For this time he speaks truth, which  
we should hear,

And asks for mercy, which I most should  
grant,

In like wise, as he tells us—in like wise!  
And therefore I thee pardon, Lucifer,  
As freely as the streams of Eden flowed  
When we were happy by them. So,  
depart;

Leave us to walk the remnant of our time  
Out mildly in the desert. Do not seek  
To harm us any more or scoff at us,  
Or ere the dust be laid upon our face,  
To find there the communion of the dust  
And issue of the dust.—Go.

*Adam.* At once, go.

*Luc.* Forgive! and go! Ye images  
of clay,  
Shrunk somewhat in the mould,—what  
jest is this?

What words are these to use? By what  
a thought

Conceive ye of me? Yesterday — a snake!  
To-day—what?

*Adam.* A strong spirit.

*Eve.* A sad spirit.

*Adam.* Perhaps a fallen angel.—Who  
shall say!

*Luc.* Who told thee, Adam?

*Adam.* Thou! The prodigy  
Of thy vast brows and melancholy eyes  
Which comprehend the heights of some  
great fall.

I think that thou hast one day worn a  
crown

Under the eyes of God.

*Luc.* And why of God?

*Adam.* It were no crown else.  
Verily, I think

Thou'rt fallen far. I had not yesterday  
Said it so surely, but I know to-day  
Grief by grief, sin by sin!

*Luc.* A crown, by a crown.

*Adam.* Aye, mock me! now I know  
more than I knew:

Now I know thou art fallen below hope  
Of final re-ascent.

*Luc.* Because?

*Adam.* Because  
A spirit who expected to see God,  
Though at the last point of a million  
years,

Could dare no mockery of a ruined man  
Such as this Adam.

*Luc.* Who is high and bold—

Be it said passing!—of a good red clay  
Discovered on some top of Lebanon,  
Or haply of Aornus, beyond sweep  
Of the black eagle's wing! A furlong  
lower

Had made a meeker king for Eden. Soh!  
Is it not possible, by sin and grief  
(To give the things your names) that  
spirits should rise

Instead of falling?

*Adam.* Most impossible.

The Highest being the Holy and the Glad,  
Whoever rises must approach delight  
And sanctity in the act.

*Luc.* Ha, my clay-king!

Thou wilt not rule by wisdom very long  
The after generations. Earth, methinks,  
Will disinherit thy philosophy  
For a new doctrine suited to thine heirs,  
And class these present dogmas with the  
rest

Of the old-world traditions, Eden fruits  
And Saurian fossils.

*Eve.* Speak no more with him,  
Beloved! it is not good to speak with him.  
Go from us, Lucifer, and speak no more!  
We have no pardon which thou dost not  
scorn,

Nor any bliss, thou seest, for coveting,  
Nor innocence for staining. Being bereft,  
We would be alone.—Go.

*Luc.* Ah! ye talk the same,  
All of you—spirits and clay—go, and  
depart!

In Heaven they said so; and at Eden's  
gate,—

And here, reiterant, in the wilderness.  
None saith, Stay with me, for thy face  
is fair!

None saith, Stay with me, for thy voice  
is sweet!

And yet I was not fashioned out of clay.  
Look on me, woman! Am I beautiful?

*Eve.* Thou hast a glorious darkness.

*Luc.* Nothing more?

*Eve.* I think, no more.

*Luc.* False Heart—  
thou thinkest more!

Thou canst not choose but think, as  
I praise God,

Unwillingly but fully, that I stand  
Most absolute in beauty. As yourselves  
Were fashioned very good at best, so we

Sprang very beauteous from the creant  
Word

Which thrilled behind us, God Himself  
being moved

When that august work of a perfect shape  
His dignities of sovran angel-hood  
Swept out into the universe,—divine  
With thunderous movements, earnest  
looks of gods,

And silver-solemn clash of cymbal wings!  
Whereof was I, in motion and in form,

A part not poorest. And yet,—yet,  
perhaps,

This beauty which I speak of, is not here,  
As God's voice is not here, nor even my  
crown—

I do not know. What is this thought  
or thing

Which I call beauty? is it thought, or  
thing?

Is it a-thought accepted for a thing?  
Or both? or neither?—a pretext—a word!  
Its meaning flutters in me like a flame  
Under my own breath: my perceptions  
reel

For evermore around it, and fall off,  
As if it too were holy.

*Eve.* Which it is.

*Adam.* The essence of all beauty,  
I call love.

The attribute, the evidence, and end,  
The consummation to the inward sense,  
Of beauty apprehended from without,  
I still call love. As form, when colour-  
less,

Is nothing to the eye,—that pine-tree  
there,

Without its black and green, being all  
a blank,—

So, without love, is beauty undiscerned  
In man or angel. Angel! rather ask

What love is in thee, what love moves  
to thee,

And what collateral love moves on with  
thee;

Then shalt thou know if thou art beautiful.

*Luc.* Love! what is love? I lose it.  
Beauty and love

I darken to the image. Beauty—love!

[*He fades away, while a low music sounds.*

*Adam.* Thou art pale, Eve.

*Eve.* The precipice of ill!

Down this colossal nature, dizzies me—  
And, hark! the starry harmony remote  
Seems measuring the heights from  
whence he fell.

*Adam.* Think that we have not fallen  
so. By the hope  
And aspiration, by the love and faith,  
We do exceed the stature of this angel.

*Eve.* Happier we are than he is, by  
the death.

*Adam.* Or rather, by the life of the  
Lord God!  
How dim the angel grows, as if that  
blast  
Of music swept him back into the dark.

[*The music is stronger, gathering itself  
into uncertain articulation.*]

*Eve.* It throbs in on us like a plaintive  
heart,  
Pressing, with slow pulsations, vibrative,  
Its gradual sweetness through the yield-  
ing air,  
To such expression as the stars may use.  
Most starry-sweet and strange! With  
every note  
That grows more loud, the angel grows  
more dim,  
Receding in proportion to approach,  
Until he stand afar,—a shade.

*Adam.* Now, words.

SONG OF THE MORNING STAR TO  
LUCIFER.

*He fades utterly away and vanishes,  
as it proceeds.*

Mine orbèd image sinks  
Back from thee, back from thee,  
As thou art fallen, methinks,  
Back from me, back from me.  
O my light-bearer,  
Could another fairer  
Lack to thee, lack to thee!  
Ah, ah, Heosphoros!  
I loved thee with the fiery love of stars  
Who love by burning, and by loving move,  
Too near the throned Jehovah not to love.  
Ah, ah, Heosphoros!  
Their brows flash fast on me from gliding  
cars,  
Pale-passioned for my loss.  
Ah, ah, Heosphoros!

Mine orbèd heats drop cold  
Down from thee, down from thee,  
As fell thy grace of old  
Down from me, down from me.  
O my light-bearer,  
Is another fairer  
Won to thee, won to thee?  
Ah, ah, Heosphoros,  
Great love preceded loss,  
Known to thee, known to thee.  
Ah, ah!

Thou, breathing thy communicable grace  
Of life into my light,  
Mine astral faces, from thine angel face,  
Hast inly fed,  
And flooded me with radiance overmuch  
From thy pure height.

Ah, ah!  
Thou, with calm, floating pinions both  
ways spread,  
Erect, irradiated,  
Didst sting my wheel of glory  
On, on before thee

Along the Godlight by a quickening touch!  
Ha, ha!  
Around, around the firmamental ocean  
I swam expanding with delirious fire!  
Around, around, around, in blind desire  
To be drawn upward to the Infinite—  
Ha, ha!

Until, the motion flinging out the motion  
To a keen whirl of passion and avidity,  
To a dim whirl of languor and delight,  
I wound in girant orbits smooth and  
white

With that intense rapidity.  
Around, around,  
I wound and interwound,  
While all the cyclic heavens about me  
spun.  
Stars, planets, suns, and moons dilated  
broad,  
Then flashed together into a single sun,  
And wound, and wound in one,  
And as they wound I wound,—around,  
around,

In a great fire I almost took for God!  
Ha, ha, Heosphoros!

Thine angel glory sinks  
Down from me, down from me—  
My beauty falls, methinks,  
Down from thee, down from thee!

O my light-bearer,  
O my path-preparer,  
Gone from me, gone from me!  
Ah, ah, Heosphoros!  
I cannot kindle underneath the brow  
Of this new angel here, who is not thou.  
All things are altered since that time  
ago,—

And if I shine at eve, I shall not know.  
I am strange—I am slow.

Ah, ah, Heosphoros!  
Henceforward, human eyes of lovers be  
The only sweetest sight that I shall see,  
With tears between the looks raised up  
to me.

Ah, ah!  
When, having wept all night, at break  
of day  
Above the folded hills they shall survey  
My light, a little trembling, in the grey.  
Ah, ah!

And gazing on me, such shall comprehend,  
Through all my piteous pomp at morn  
or even

And melancholy leaning out of heaven,  
That love, their own divine, may change  
or end,

That love may close in loss!  
Ah, ah, Heosphoros!

SCENE.—*Farther on. A wild open country seen vaguely in the approaching night.*

Adam. How doth the wide and  
melancholy earth  
Gather her hills around us, grey and  
ghast,  
And stare with blank significance of loss  
Right in our faces! Is the wind up?

Eve. Nay.

Adam. And yet the cedars and the  
junipers  
Rock slowly through the mist, without a  
sound,  
And shapes which have no certainty of  
shape

Drift dusky in and out between the pines,  
And loom along the edges of the hills,  
And lie flat, curdling in the open ground—  
Shadows without a body, which contract

And lengthen as we gaze on them.

Eve. Oh life  
Which is not man's nor angel's! What  
is this?

Adam. No cause for fear. The circle  
of God's life  
Contains all life beside.

Eve. I think the earth  
Is crazed with curse, and wanders from  
the sense

Of those first laws affixed to form and  
space

Or ever she knew sin.

Adam. We will not fear:  
We were brave sinning.

Eve. Yea, I plucked the fruit  
With eyes upturned to heaven and seeing  
there

Our god-thrones, as the tempter said,—  
not God.

My heart, which beat then, sinks. The  
sun hath sunk

Out of sight with our Eden.

Adam. Night is near.

Eve. And God's curse, nearest. Let  
us travel back

And stand within the sword-glare till  
we die,

Believing it is better to meet death  
Than suffer desolation.

Adam. Nay, beloved!  
We must not pluck death from the  
Maker's hand,  
As erst we plucked the apple: we must  
wait

Until He gives death as He gave us life,  
Nor murmur faintly o'er the primal gift  
Because we spoilt its sweetness with  
our sin.

Eve. Ah, ah! dost thou discern what  
I behold?

Adam. I see all. How the spirits in  
thine eyes

From their dilated orbits bound before  
To meet the spectral Dread!

Eve. I am afraid—  
Ah, ah! the twilight bristles wild with  
shapes

Of intermittent motion, aspect vague  
And mystic bearings, which o'ercreep  
the earth,

Keeping slow time with horrors in the  
blood.

How near they reach . . . and far! How  
grey they move—

Treading upon the darkness without feet,  
And fluttering on the darkness without  
wings!

Some run like dogs, with noses to the  
ground;

Some keep one path, like sheep; some  
rock like trees;

Some glide like a fallen leaf; and some  
flow on

Copious as rivers.

*Adam.* Some spring up like fire—  
And some coil . . .

*Eve.* Ah, ah! dost thou pause to say  
Like what?—coil like the serpent, when  
he fell

From all the emerald splendour of his  
height

And writhed, and could not climb against  
the curse,

Not a ring's length. I am afraid—  
afraid—

I think it is God's will to make me  
afraid,—

Permitting these to haunt us in the place  
Of His beloved angels—gone from us

Because we are not pure. Dear Pity  
of God,

That didst permit the angels to go home  
And live no more with us who are not

pure,

Save us too from a loathly company—  
Almost as loathly in our eyes, perhaps,

As we are in the purest! Pity us—  
Us too! nor shut us in the dark, away

From verity and from stability,  
Or what we name such through the

precedence

Of earth's adjusted uses,—leave us not  
To doubt betwixt our senses and our

souls,

Which are the more distraught and full  
of pain

And weak of apprehension.

*Adam.* Courage, Sweet!  
The mystic shapes ebb back from us,  
and drop

With slow concentric movement, each  
on each,—

Expressing wider spaces,—and collapsed  
In lines more definite for imagery

And clearer for relation, till the throng

Of shapeless spectra merge into a few  
Distinguishable phantasms vague and  
grand

Which sweep out and around us vastly  
And hold us in a circle and a calm.

*Eve.* Strange phantasms of pale  
shadow! there are twelve.

Thou who didst name all lives, hast  
names for these?

*Adam.* Methinks this is the zodiac of  
the earth,

Which rounds us with a visionary dread,  
Responding with twelve shadowy signs  
of earth,

In fantasmic apposition and approach,  
To those celestial, constellated twelve

Which palpitate adown the silent nights  
Under the pressure of the hand of God

Stretched wide in benediction. At this  
hour,

Not a star pricketh the flat gloom of  
heaven!

But, girdling close our nether wilderness,  
The zodiac-figures of the earth loom

slow,—

Drawn out, as suiteth with the place  
and time,

In twelve colossal shades instead of stars,  
Through which the ecliptic line of

mystery  
Strikes bleakly with an unrelenting

scope,  
Foreshowing life and death.

*Eve.* By dream or sense,  
Do we see this?

*Adam.* Our spirits have climbed high  
By reason of the passion of our grief,

And, from the top of sense, looked over  
sense,

To the significance and heart of things  
Rather than things themselves.

*Eve.* And the dim twelve . . .

*Adam.* Are dim exponents of the  
creature-life

As earth contains it. Gaze on them,  
beloved!

By stricter apprehension of the sight,  
Suggestions of the creature shall assuage

The terror of the shadows,—what is  
known

Subduing the unknown and taming it  
From all prodigious dread. That phan-

tasmm, there,

Presents a lion, albeit twenty times  
As large as any lion—with a roar  
Set soundless in his vibratory jaws,  
And a strange horror stirring in his mane.  
And, there, a pendulous shadow seems  
to weigh—

Good against ill, perchance; and there,  
a crab

Puts coldly out its gradual shadow-claws,  
Like a slow blot that spreads,—till all  
the ground,

Crawled over by it, seems to crawl itself.  
A bull stands horned here with gibbous  
glooms;

And a ram likewise! and a scorpion  
writhes

Its tail in ghastly slime and stings the  
dark.

This way a goat leaps with wild blank  
of beard;

And here, fantastic fishes dusky float,  
Using the calm for waters, while their fins  
Throb out quick rhythms along the  
shallow air.

While images more human —

*Eve.* How he stands,  
That phantasm of a man—who is not thou!  
Two phantasms of two men!

*Adam.* One that sustains,  
And one that strives,—resuming, so, the  
ends

Of manhood's curse of labour<sup>1</sup>. Dost  
thou see

That phantasm of a woman?—

*Eve.* I have seen,  
But look off to those small humanities<sup>2</sup>  
Which draw me tenderly across my  
fear,—

Lesser and fainter than my womanhood  
Or yet thy manhood—with strange  
innocence

Set in the misty lines of head and hand.  
They lean together! I would gaze on  
them

<sup>1</sup> Adam recognizes in *Aquarius*, the water-bearer, and *Sagittarius*, the archer, distinct types of the man bearing and the man combating,—the passive and active forms of human labour. I hope that the preceding zodiacal signs — transferred to the earthly shadow and representative purpose—of Aries, Taurus, Cancer, Leo, Libra, Scorpio, Capricornus, and Pisces, are sufficiently obvious to the reader.

<sup>2</sup> Her maternal instinct is excited by *Gemini*.

Longer and longer, till my watching  
eyes,

As the stars do in watching anything,  
Should light them forward from their  
outline vague

To clear configuration.

[Two Spirits, of organic and inorganic  
nature, arise from the ground.

But what Shapes  
Rise up between us in the open space,  
And thrust me into horror, back from  
hope!

*Adam.* Colossal Shapes—twin sovran  
images,

With a disconsolate, blank majesty  
Set in their wondrous faces! with no look,  
And yet an aspect—a significance  
Of individual life and passionate ends,  
Which overcomes us gazing.

O bleak sound,  
O shadow of sound, O phantasm of thin  
sound!

How it comes, wheeling as the pale  
moth wheels,

Wheeling and wheeling in continuous  
wail

Around the cyclic zodiac, and gains  
force,

And gathers, settling coldly like a moth,  
On the wan faces of these images

We see before us,—whereby modified,  
It draws a straight line of articulate song  
From out that spiral faintness of lament,  
And, by one voice, expresses many griefs.

### *First Spirit.*

I am the spirit of the harmless earth.

God spake me softly out among the  
stars,

As softly as a blessing of much worth;  
And then, His smile did follow un-  
aware,

That all things fashioned so for use and  
duty

Might shine anointed with His chrism  
of beauty—

Yet I wail!

I drave on with the worlds exultingly,  
Obliquely down the Godlight's gradual  
fall;

Individual aspect and complexity  
Of giratory orb and interval

Lost in the fluent motion of delight  
Toward the high ends of Being beyond  
sight—

Yet I wail !

*Second Spirit.*

I am the spirit of the harmless beasts,  
Of flying things, and creeping things,  
and swimming ;  
Of all the lives, erst set at silent feasts,  
That found the love-kiss on the goblet  
brimming,  
And tasted in each drop within the  
measure  
The sweetest pleasure of their Lord's  
good pleasure—

Yet I wail !

What a full hum of life around His lips  
Bore witness to the fullness of creation !  
How all the grand words were full-laden  
ships

Each sailing onward from enunciation  
To separate existence,—and each bearing  
The creature's power of joying, hoping,  
fearing !

Yet I wail !

*Eve.* They wail, beloved ! they speak  
of glory and God,  
And they wail—wail. That burden of  
the song

Drops from it like its fruit, and heavily falls  
Into the lap of silence.

*Adam.* Hark, again !

*First Spirit.*

I was so beautiful, so beautiful,  
My joy stood up within me bold to add  
A word to God's,—and, when His work  
was full,

To 'very good,' responded 'very glad !'  
Filtered through roses, did the light  
enclose me,

And bunches of the grape swam blue  
across me—

Yet I wail !

*Second Spirit.*

I bounded with my panthers ! I rejoiced  
In my young tumbling lions rolled  
together !

My stag, the river at his fetlocks, poised  
Then dipped his antlers through the  
golden weather

In the same ripple which the alligator  
Left, in his joyous troubling of the  
water—

Yet I wail !

*First Spirit.*

O my deep waters, cataract and flood,  
What wordless triumph did your voices  
render !

O mountain-summits, where the angels  
stood

And shook from head and wing thick  
dews of splendour !

How, with a holy quiet, did your Earthy  
Accept that Heavenly, knowing ye were  
worthy !

Yet I wail !

*Second Spirit.*

O my wild wood-dogs, with your listen-  
ing eyes !

My horses—my ground-eagles, for  
swift fleeing !

My birds, with viewless wings of  
harmonies,

My calm cold fishes of a silver being,  
How happy were ye, living and possess-  
ing,

O fair half-souls capacious of full bless-  
ing !

Yet I wail !

*First Spirit.*

I wail, I wail ! Now hear my charge  
to-day,

Thou man, thou woman, marked as  
the misdoers

By God's sword at your backs ! I lent  
my clay

To make your bodies, which had grown  
more flowers :

And now, in change for what I lent, ye  
give me

The thorn to vex, the tempest-fire to  
cleave me—

And I wail !

*Second Spirit.*

I wail, I wail ! Behold ye that I fasten  
My sorrow's fang upon your souls  
dishonoured !

Accursed transgressors ! down the steep  
ye hasten,—

Your crown's weight on the world, to  
drag it downward

Unto your ruin. Lo! my lions, scenting  
The blood of wars, roar hoarse and un-  
relenting—  
And I wail!

*First Spirit.*

I wail, I wail! Do you hear that I wail?  
I had no part in your transgression—  
none.  
My roses on the bough did bud not pale,  
My rivers did not loiter in the sun;  
I was obedient. Wherefore in my centre  
Do I thrill at this curse of death and  
winter?—  
Do I wail?

*Second Spirit.*

I wail, I wail! I wail in the assault  
Of undeserved perdition, sorely  
wounded!  
My nightingale sang sweet without a  
fault,  
My gentle leopards innocently bounded.  
We were obedient. What is this con-  
vulses  
Our blameless life with pangs and fever  
pulses?  
And I wail!

*Eve.* I choose God's thunder and His  
angels' swords  
To die by, Adam, rather than such words.  
Let us pass out and flee.

*Adam.* We cannot flee.  
This zodiac of the creatures' cruelty  
Curls round us, like a river cold and  
drear,  
And shuts us in, constraining us to hear.

*First Spirit.*

I feel your steps, O wandering sinners,  
strike  
A sense of death to me, and undug  
graves!  
The heart of earth, once calm, is trem-  
bling like  
The ragged foam along the ocean-  
waves:  
The restless earthquakes rock against  
each other;  
The elements moan 'round me—'Mother,  
mother'—  
And I wail!

*Second Spirit.*

Your melancholy looks do pierce me  
through;  
Corruption swathes the paleness of  
your beauty.  
Why have ye done this thing? What  
did we do  
That we should fall from bliss as ye  
from duty?  
Wild shriek the hawks, in waiting for  
their jesses,  
Fierce howl the wolves along the wilder-  
nesses—  
And I wail!

*Adam.* To thee, the Spirit of the  
harmless earth,  
To thee, the Spirit of earth's harmless  
lives,  
Inferior creatures but still innocent,  
Be salutation from a guilty mouth  
Yet worthy of some audience and respect  
From you who are not guilty. If we  
have sinned,  
God hath rebuked us, who is over us  
To give rebuke or death, and if ye wail  
Because of any suffering from our sin,  
Ye who are under and not over us,  
Be satisfied with God, if not with us,  
And pass out from our presence in such  
peace  
As we have left you, to enjoy revenge  
Such as the Heavens have made you.  
Verily,  
There must be strife between us, large  
as sin.

*Eve.* No strife, mine Adam! Let us  
not stand high  
Upon the wrong we did to reach disdain,  
Who rather should be humbler evermore  
Since self-made sadder. Adam! shall  
I speak—  
I who spake once to such a bitter end—  
Shall I speak humbly now, who once  
was proud?  
I, schooled by sin to more humility  
Than thou hast, O mine Adam, O my  
king—

*My king, if not the world's?*

*Adam.* Speak as thou wilt.

*Eve.* Thus, then—my hand in thine—

. . . Sweet, dreadful Spirits!  
I pray you humbly in the name of God,

Not to say of these tears, which are impure—

Grant me such pardoning grace as can go forth

From clean volitions toward a spotted will,

From the wronged to the wronger, this and no more ;

I do not ask more. I am 'ware, indeed, That absolute pardon is impossible

From you to me, by reason of my sin,— And that I cannot evermore, as once,

With worthy acceptation of pure joy, Behold the trances of the holy hills

Beneath the leaning stars, or watch the vales

Dew-pallid with their morning ecstasy,— Or hear the winds make pastoral peace between

Two grassy uplands,—and the river-wells Work out their bubbling mysteries under ground,—

And all the birds sing, till for joy of song, They lift their trembling wings as if to heave

The too-much weight of music from their heart

And float it up the ether. I am 'ware That these things I can no more apprehend

With a pure organ into a full delight,— The sense of beauty and of melody

Being no more aided in me by the sense Of personal adjustment to those heights

Of what I see well-formed or hear well-tuned,

But rather coupled darkly and made ashamed

By my perniciency of sin and fall In melancholy of humilant thoughts.

But, oh ! fair, dreadful Spirits—albeit this Your accusation must confront my soul,

And your pathetic utterance and full gaze Must evermore subdue me, be content—

Conquer me gently—as if pitying me, Not to say loving ! let my tears fall thick

As watering dews of Eden, unapproached ;

And when your tongues reprove me, make me smooth,

Not ruffled—smooth and still with your reproof,

And peradventure better while more sad. For look to it, sweet Spirits, look well to it,

It will not be amiss in you who kept The law of your own righteousness, and keep

The right of your own griefs to mourn themselves,—

To pity me twice fallen, from that, and this,

From joy of place, and also right of wail, 'I wail' being not for me—only 'I sin.'

Look to it, O sweet Spirits !—

For was I not, At that last sunset seen in Paradise,

When all the westering clouds flashed out in throngs

Of sudden angel-faces, face by face, All hushed and solemn, as a thought of God

Held them suspended,—was I not, that hour,

The lady of the world, princess of life, Mistress of feast and favour ? Could I touch

A rose with my white hand, but it became Redder at once ? Could I walk leisurely

Along our swarded garden, but the grass Tracked me with greenness ? Could I stand aside

A moment underneath a cornel-tree, But all the leaves did tremble as alive

With songs of fifty birds who were made glad

Because I stood there ? Could I turn to look

With these twain eyes of mine, now weeping fast,

Now good for only weeping,—upon man, Angel, or beast, or bird, but each rejoiced

Because I looked on him ? Alas, alas ! And is not this much woe, to cry 'alas !'

Speaking of joy ? And is not this more shame,

To have made the woe myself, from all that joy ?

To have stretched my hand, and plucked it from the tree,

And chosen it for fruit ? Nay, is not this Still most despair,—to have halved that bitter fruit,

And ruined, so, the sweetest friend I have, Turning the GREATEST to mine enemy ?

Adam. I will not hear thee speak so. Harken, Spirits !

Our God, who is the enemy of none

But only of their sin, hath set your hope  
And my hope, in a promise, on this Head.  
Show reverence, then, and never bruise  
her more

With unpermitted and extreme reproach,—

Lest, passionate in anguish, she fling  
down

Beneath your trampling feet, God's gift  
to us

Of sovranity by reason and free will,  
Sinning against the province of the Soul  
Torulethesoulless. Reverence herestate,  
And pass out from her presence with no  
words.

*Eve.* O dearest Heart, have patience  
with my heart!

O Spirits, have patience, 'stead of  
reverence,

And let me speak, for, not being innocent,  
It little doth become me to be proud,  
And I am prescient by the very hope  
And promiscset upon me, that henceforth  
Only my gentleness shall make me great,  
My humbleness exalt me. Awful Spirits,  
Be witness that I stand in your reproof  
But one sun's length off from my happiness—

Happy, as I have said, to look around,  
Clear to look up!—And now! I need  
not speak—

Ye see me what I am; ye scorn me so,  
Because ye see me what I have made  
myself

From God's best making! Alas,—peace  
foregone,

Love wronged, and virtue forfeit, and  
tears wept

Upon all, vainly! Alas, me! alas,  
Who have undone myself from all that  
best,

Fairest and sweetest, to this wretchedest,  
Saddest and most defiled—cast out, cast  
down—

What word metes absolute loss! let  
absolute loss

Suffice you for revenge. For *I*, who lived  
Beneath the wings of angels yesterday,  
Wander to-day beneath the roofless  
world!

*I*, reigning the earth's empress yesterday,  
Put off from me, to-day, your hate with  
prayers!

*I*, yesterday, who answered the Lord  
God,

Composed and glad as singing-birds the  
sun,

Might shriek now from our dismal  
desert, 'God,'

And hear Him make reply, 'What is  
thy need,

Thou whom I cursed to-day?'

*Adam.* *Eve!*

*Eve.* *I*, at last,

Who yesterday was helpmate and delight  
Unto mine Adam, am to-day the grief  
And curse-mete for him! And, so, pity us,  
Ye gentle Spirits, and pardon him and me,  
And let some tender peace, made of our  
pain,

Grow up betwixt us, as a tree might grow,  
With boughs on both sides. In the shade  
of which,

When presently ye shall behold us  
dead,—

For the poor sake of our humility,  
Breathe out your pardon on our breath-  
less lips,

And drop your twilight dews against our  
brows,

And stroking with mild airs our harm-  
less hands

Left empty of all fruit, perceive your love  
Distilling through your pity over us,  
And suffer it, self-reconciled, to pass,

*LUCIFER rises in the circle.*

*Luc.* Who talks here of a complement  
of grief?

Of expiation wrought by loss and fall?  
Of hate subduable to pity? *Eve?*

Take counsel from thy counsellor the  
snake,

And boast no more in grief, nor hope  
from pain,

My docile *Eve!* I teach you to despond,  
Who taught you disobedience. Look  
around;—

Earth-spirits and phantasms hear you  
talk unmoved,

As if ye were red clay again and talked  
What are your words to them? your  
grief to them?

Your deaths, indeed, to them? Did the  
hand pause

For *their* sake, in the plucking of the fruit,

That they should pause for *you*, in hating  
you?

Or will your grief or death, as did your sin,  
Bring change upon their final doom?

Behold,  
Your grief is but your sin in the rebound,  
And cannot expiate for it.

*Adam.* That is true.

*Luc.* Aye, that is true. The clay-king  
testifies

To the snake's counsel,—hear him!—  
very true.

*Earth Spirits.* I wail, I wail!

*Luc.* And certes, *that* is true.  
Ye wail, ye all wail. Peradventure I  
Could wail among you. O thou universe,  
That holdest sin and woe,—more room  
for wail!

*Distant starry voice.* Ah, ah, Heos-  
phoros! Heosphoros!

*Adam.* Mark Lucifer. He changes  
awfully.

*Eve.* It seems as if he looked from  
grief to God

And could not see Him!—wretched  
Lucifer!

*Adam.* How he stands—yet an angel!

*Earth Spirits.* We all wail!

*Luc. (after a pause.)* Dost thou re-  
member, Adam, when the curse

Took us in Eden? On a mountain-peak  
Half-sheathed in primal woods and  
glittering

In spasms of awful sunshine at that hour,  
A lion couched, part raised upon his paws,  
With his calm, massive face turned full  
on thine,

And his mane listening. When the  
ended curse

Left silence in the world, right suddenly  
He sprang up rampant and stood straight  
and stiff,

As if the new reality of death  
Were dashed against his eyes, and  
roared so fierce

(Such thick carnivorous passion in his  
throat

Tearing a passage through the wrath  
and fear)

And roared so wild, and smote from all  
the hills

Such fast, keen echoes crumbling down  
the vales

Precipitately,—that the forest beasts,  
One after one, did mutter a response  
Of savage and of sorrowful complaint  
Which trailed along the gorges. Then,  
at once,

He fell back, and rolled crashing from  
the height

Into the dusk of pines.

*Adam.* It might have been.  
I heard the curse alone.

*Earth Spirits.* I wail, I wail!

*Luc.* That lion is the type of what I am.  
And as he fixed thee with his full-faced  
hate,

And roared, O Adam, comprehending  
doom,

So, gazing on the face of the Unseen,  
I cry out here between the Heavens and

Earth  
My conscience of this sin, this woe, this  
wrath,

Which damn me to this depth.

*Earth Spirits.* I wail, I wail!

*Eve.* I wail—O God!

*Luc.* I scorn you that ye wail,  
Who use your pretty griefs for pedestals  
To stand on, beckoning pity from without,  
And deal in pathos of antithesis  
Of what ye *were* forsooth, and what ye  
are ;—

I scorn you like an angel! Yet, one cry  
I, too, would drive up like a column erect,  
Marble to marble, from my heart to  
Heaven,

A monument of anguish to transpire  
And overtop your vapory complaints  
Expressed from feeble woes.

*Earth Spirits.* I wail, I wail!

*Luc.* For, O ye Heavens, ye are my  
witnesses,

That I, struck out from nature in a blot,  
The outcast and the mildew of things  
good,

The leper of angels, the excepted dust  
Under the common rain of daily gifts,—  
I the snake, I the tempter, I the cursed,—  
To whom the highest and the lowest alike  
Say, 'Go from us—we have no need of  
thee,'—

Was made by God like others. Good  
and fair,

He did create me!—ask Him, if not fair!  
Ask, if I caught not fair and silverly

His blessing for chief angels on my head  
 Until it grew there, a crown crystallized!  
 Ask, if He never called me by my name,  
*Lucifer*—kindly said as 'Gabriel'—  
*Lucifer*—soft as 'Michael!' while serene  
 I, standing in the glory of the lamps,  
 Answered 'my Father,' innocent of  
 shame

And of the sense of thunder. Ha! ye  
 think,  
 White angels in your niches,—I repent,  
 And would tread down my own offences  
 back

To service at the footstool? *that's* read  
 wrong!

I cry as the beast did, that I may cry—  
 Expansive, not appealing! Fallen so deep,  
 Against the sides of this prodigious pit  
 I cry—cry—dashing out the hands of wail  
 On each side, to meet anguish every-  
 where,

And to attest it in the ecstasy  
 And exaltation of a woe sustained  
 Because provoked and chosen.

Pass along  
 Your wilderness, vain mortals! Puny  
 griefs

In transitory shapes, be henceforth  
 dwarfed

To your own conscience, by the dread  
 extremes

Of what I am and have been. If ye have  
 fallen,

It is but a step's fall,—the whole ground  
 beneath

Strewn woolly soft with promise! if ye  
 have sinned,

Your prayers tread high as angels! if  
 ye have grieved,

Ye are too mortal to be pitiable,  
 The power to die disproves the right to  
 grieve.

Go to! ye call this ruin? I half scorn  
 The ill I did you! Were ye wronged  
 by me,

Hated and tempted and undone of me,—  
 Still, what's your hurt to mine of doing  
 hurt,

Of hating, tempting, and so ruining?  
 This sword's *hilt* is the sharpest, and  
 cuts through

The hand that wields it.

Go—I curse you all.

Hate one another—feebly—as ye can;  
 I would not certes cut you short in hate:  
 Far be it from me! hate on as ye can!  
 I breathe into your faces, spirits of earth,  
 As wintry blast may breathe on wintry  
 leaves

And lifting up their brownness show  
 beneath

The branches bare. — Beseech you,  
 spirits, give

To Eve, who beggarly entreats your love  
 For her and Adam when they shall be  
 dead,

An answer rather fitting to the sin  
 Than to the sorrow—as the Heavens, I  
 trow,

For justice' sake gave theirs.

I curse you both,  
 Adam and Eve! Say grace as after meat,  
 After my curses. May your tears fall hot  
 On all the hissing scorns o' the creatures  
 here,—

And yet rejoice. Increase and multiply,  
 Ye in your generations, in all plagues,  
 Corruptions, melancholies, poverties,  
 And hideous forms of life and fears of  
 death,—

The thought of death being always  
 imminent,

Immovable and dreadful in your life,  
 And dead and dumbly insignificant  
 Of any hope beyond,—as death itself,  
 Whichever of you lieth dead the first,  
 Shall seem to the survivor—yet rejoice!  
 My curse catch at you strongly, body  
 and soul,

And He find no redemption—nor the wing  
 Of seraph move your way; and yet  
 rejoice!

Rejoice,—because ye have not, set in you,  
 This hate which shall pursue you—this  
 fire-hate

Which glares without, because it burns  
 within—

Which kills from ashes—this potential  
 hate,

Wherein I, angel, in antagonism  
 To God and his reflex beatitudes,  
 Moan ever in the central universe  
 With the great woe of striving against  
 Love—

And gasp for space amid the Infinite,  
 And toss for rest amid the Desertness,

Self-orphaned by my will, and self-elect  
 To kingship of resistant agony  
 Toward the Good round me—hating  
     good and love,  
 And willing to hate good and to hate love,  
 And willing to will on so evermore,  
 Scorning the past and damning the To  
     come—  
 Go and rejoice! I curse you.

[LUCIFER *vanishes*.]

*Earth Spirits.*

And we scorn you! there's no pardon  
 Which can lean to you aright.  
 When your bodies take the guerdon  
 Of the death-curse in our sight,  
 Then the bee that hummeth lowest shall  
     transcend you:  
 Then ye shall not move an eyelid  
 Though the stars look down your  
     eyes;  
 And the earth which ye defiled,  
 Shall expose you to the skies,—  
 'Lo! these kings of ours, who sought  
     to comprehend you.'

*First Spirit.*

And the elements shall boldly  
 All your dust to dust constrain.  
 Unresistedly and coldly  
 I will smite you with my rain.  
 From the slowest of my frosts is no  
     receding.

*Second Spirit.*

And my little worm, appointed  
 To assume a royal part,  
 He shall reign, crowned and anointed,  
 O'er the noble human heart.  
 Give him counsel against losing of that  
     Eden!

*Adam.*

Do ye scorn us? Back your scorn  
 Towards your faces grey and lorn,  
 As the wind drives back the rain,  
 Thus I drive with passion-strife,  
 I who stand beneath God's sun,  
 Made like God, and, though undone,  
 Not unmade for love and life.  
 Lo! ye utter threats in vain.  
 By my free will that chose sin,  
 By mine agony within  
 Round the passage of the fire,  
 By the pinings which disclose

That my native soul is higher  
 Than what it chose,  
 We are yet too high, O Spirits, for your  
     disdain.

*Eve.*

Nay, beloved! If these be low,  
 We confront them from no height.  
 We have stooped down to their level  
 By infecting them with evil,  
 And their scorn that meets our blow  
     Scathes aright.  
 Amen. Let it be so.

*Earth Spirits.*

We shall triumph—triumph greatly  
 When ye lie beneath the sward.  
 There, our lily shall grow stately  
 Though ye answer not a word,  
 And her fragrance shall be scornful of  
     your silence:  
 While your throne ascending calmly  
 We, in heirdom of your soul,  
 Flash the river, lift the palm-tree,  
 The dilated ocean roll  
 By the thoughts that throbbed within  
     you, round the islands.

Alp and torrent shall inherit  
 Your significance of will,  
 And the grandeur of your spirit  
 Shall our broad savannahs fill;  
 In our winds, your exultations shall be  
     springing.  
 Even your parlance which inveigles,  
 By our rudeness shall be won.  
 Hearts poetic in our eagles  
 Shall beat up against the sun  
 And strike downward in articulate clear  
     singing.

Your bold speeches, our Behemoth  
 With his thunderous jaw shall wield.  
 Your high fancies, shall our Mammoth  
 Breathe sublimely up the shield  
 Of Saint Michael at God's throne, who  
     waits to speed him!  
 Till the heaven's smooth-grooved  
     thunder  
 Spinning back, shall leave them clear,  
 And the angels smiling wonder  
 With dropt looks from sphere to  
     sphere,  
 Shall cry, 'Ho, ye heirs of Adam! ye  
     exceed him!'

*Adam.* Root out thine eyes, Sweet,  
from the dreary ground.  
Beloved, we may be overcome by God,  
But not by these.

*Eve.* By God, perhaps, in these.

*Adam.* I think, not so. Had God  
foredoomed despair,  
He had not spoken hope. He may destroy  
Certes, but not deceive.

*Eve.* Behold this rose!  
I plucked it in our bower of Paradise  
This morning as I went forth, and my  
heart

Has beat against its petals all the day.  
I thought it would be always red and full  
As when I plucked it—*Is it?*—ye may  
see!

I cast it down to you that ye may see,  
All of you!—count the petals lost of it,  
And note the colours faded! ye may see!  
And I am as it is, who yesterday  
Grew in the same place. Oh ye spirits  
of earth,

I almost, from my miserable heart,  
Could here upbraid you for your cruel  
heart,

Which will not let me, down the slope  
of death,

Draw any of your pity after me,  
Or lie still in the quiet of your looks,  
As my flower, there, in mine.

*[A bleak wind, quickened with indistinct  
human voices, spins around the earth-  
sodiac, filling the circle with its pre-  
sence; and then wailing off into the  
east, carries the rose away with it.  
EVE falls upon her face. ADAM  
stands erect.]*

*Adam.* So, verily,  
The last depart.

*Eve.* So Memory follows Hope,  
And Life both. Love said to me, 'Do  
not die,'

And I replied, 'O Love, I will not die.  
I exiled and I will not orphan Love.'  
But now it is no choice of mine to die—  
My heart throbs from me.

*Adam.* Call it straightway back.  
Death's consummation crowns com-  
pleted life,  
Or comes too early. Hope being set on  
these

For others, if for others then for thee,—  
For thee and me.

*[The wind revolves from the east, and  
round again to the east, perfumed by  
the Eden-rose, and full of voices which  
sweep out into articulation as they pass.]*

Let thy soul shake its leaves  
To feel the mystic wind—hark!  
*Eve.* I hear life.

*Infant voices passing in the wind.*

Oh we live, oh we live—  
And this life that we receive  
Is a warm thing and a new,  
Which we softly bud into  
From the heart and from the brain,—  
Something strange that overmuch is  
Of the sound and of the sight,  
Flowing round in trickling touches,  
With a sorrow and delight,—  
Yet is it all in vain?

Rock us softly,  
Lest it be all in vain.

*Youthful voices passing.*

Oh we live, oh we live—  
And this life that we achieve  
Is a loud thing and a bold,  
Which with pulses manifold  
Strikes the heart out full and fain—  
Active doer, noble liver,  
Strong to struggle, sure to conquer,  
Though the vessel's prow will quiver  
At the lifting of the anchor:  
Yet do we strive in vain?

*Infant voices passing.*

Rock us softly,  
Lest it be all in vain.

*Poet voices passing.*

Oh we live, oh we live—  
And this life that we conceive  
Is a clear thing and a fair,  
Which we set in crystal air  
That its beauty may be plain!  
With a breathing and a flooding  
Of the heaven-life on the whole,  
While we hear the forests budding  
To the music of the soul—  
Yet is it tuned in vain?

*Infant voices passing.*

Rock us softly,  
Lest it be all in vain.

*Philosophic voices passing.*

Oh we live, oh we live—  
And this life that we perceive,  
Is a great thing and a grave.  
Which for others' use we have,  
Duty-laden to remain.  
We are helpers, fellow creatures,  
Of the right against the wrong,  
We are earnest-hearted teachers  
Of the truth which maketh strong—  
Yet do we teach in vain ?

*Infant voices passing.*

Rock us softly,  
Lest it be all in vain.

*Revel voices passing.*

Oh we live, oh we live—  
And this life that we reprove,  
Is a low thing and a light,  
Which is jested out of sight,  
And made worthy of disdain !  
Strike with bold electric laughter  
The high tops of things divine—  
Turn thy head, my brother, after,  
Lest thy tears fall in my wine ;—  
For is all laughed in vain ?

*Infant voices passing.*

Rock us softly,  
Lest it be all in vain.

*Eve.* I hear a sound of life—of life like  
ours—  
Of laughter and of wailing, of grave  
speech,  
Of little plaintive voices innocent,  
Of life in separate courses flowing out  
Like our four rivers to some outward  
main.  
I hear life—life !

*Adam.* And, so, thy cheeks  
have snatched  
Scarlet to paleness, and thine eyes drink  
fast  
Of glory from full cups, and thy moist lips  
Seem trembling, both of them, with  
earnest doubts  
Whether to utter words or only smile.

*Eve.* Shall I be mother of the coming  
life ?

Hear the steep generations, how they fall  
Adown the visionary stairs of Time  
Like supernatural thunders—far, yet  
near,—  
Sowing their fiery echoes through the  
hills.  
Am I a cloud to these—mother to these ?  
*Earth Spirits.* And bringer of the curse  
upon all these.

[*Eve sinks down again*

*Poet voices passing.*

Oh we live, oh we live—  
And this life that we conceive,  
Is a noble thing and high,  
Which we climb up loftily  
To view God without a stain ;  
Till, recoiling where the shade is,  
We retread our steps again,  
And descend the gloomy Hades  
To resume man's mortal pain.  
Shall it be climbed in vain ?

*Infant voices passing.*

Rock us softly,  
Lest it be all in vain.

*Love voices passing.*

Oh we live, oh we live—  
And this life we would retrieve,  
Is a faithful thing apart  
Which we love in, heart to heart,  
Until one heart fitteth twain.  
'Wilt thou be one with me ?'  
'I will be one with thee.'  
'Ha, ha !—we love and live !'  
Alas ! ye love and die.  
Shriek—who shall reply ?  
For is it not loved in vain ?

*Infant voices passing.*

Rock us softly,  
Though it be all in vain.

*Aged voices passing.*

Oh we live, oh we live—  
And this life we would survive,  
Is a gloomy thing and brief,  
Which, consummated in grief,  
Leaveth ashes for all gain.  
Is it not all in vain ?

*Infant voices passing.*

Rock us softly,  
Though it be *all* in vain.

[*Voices die away.*]

*Earth Spirits.* And bringer of the curse  
upon all these.

*Eve.* The voices of foreshown Humanity

Die off;—so let me die.

*Adam.* So let us die,  
When God's will soundeth the right  
hour of death.

*Earth Spirits.* And bringer of the  
curse upon all these.

*Eve.* O spirits! by the gentleness ye use  
In winds at night, and floating clouds at  
noon,

In gliding waters under lily-leaves,  
In chirp of crickets, and the settling hush  
A bird makes in her nest with feet and  
wings,—

Fulfil your natures now!

*Earth Spirits.*

Agreed, allowed!  
We gather out our natures like a cloud,  
And thus fulfil their lightnings! Thus,  
and thus!

Hearken, O hearken to us!

*First Spirit.*

As the storm-wind blows bleakly from  
the norland,  
As the snow-wind beats blindly on the  
moorland,

As the simoom drives hot across the  
desert,

As the thunder roars deep in the Un-  
measured,

As the torrent tears the ocean-world to  
atoms,

As the whirlpool grinds it fathoms below  
fathoms,

Thus,—and thus!

*Second Spirit.*

As the yellow toad, that spits its poison  
chilly,

As the tiger, in the jungle crouching stilly,  
As the wild boar, with ragged tusks of  
anger,

As the wolf-dog, with teeth of glittering  
clangour,

As the vultures, that scream against the  
thunder,

As the owlets, that sit and moan asunder,  
Thus,—and thus!

*Eve.* Adam! God!

*Adam.* Cruel, unrelenting spirits!  
By the power in me of the sovran soul  
Whose thoughts keep pace yet with the  
angel's march,

I charge you into silence—trample you  
Down to obedience.—I am king of you!

*Earth Spirits.*

Ha, ha! thou art king!

With a sin for a crown,

And a soul undone!

Thou, the antagonized.

Tortured and agonized,

Held in the ring

Of the zodiac!

Now, king, beware!

We are many and strong

Whom thou standest among,—

And we press on the air,

And we stifle thee back,

And we multiply where

Thou wouldst trample us down

From rights of our own

To an utter wrong—

And, from under the feet of thy scorn,  
O forlorn,

We shall spring up like corn,

And our stubble be strong.

*Adam.* God, there is power in Thee!  
I make appeal

Unto Thy kingship.

*Eve.* There is pity in Thee,  
O sinned against, great God!—My seed,  
my seed,

There is hope set on Thee—I cry to Thee,  
Thou mystic seed that shalt be!—leave  
us not

In agony beyond what we can bear,  
Fallen in debasement below thunder-  
mark,

A mark for scorning—taunted and per-  
plexed

By all these creatures we ruled yesterday,  
Whom Thou, Lord, rulest alway. O my

Seed,

Through the tempestuous years that rain  
so thick

Betwixt my ghostly vision and Thy face,

Let me have token! for my soul is bruised  
Before the serpent's head is.

[*A vision of CHRIST appears in the  
midst of the zodiac, which pales before  
the heavenly light. The Earth Spirits  
grow greyer and fainter.*

CHRIST. I AM HERE!  
Adam. This is God!—Curse us not,  
God, any more.

Eve. But gazing so—so—with omnific  
eyes,

Lift my soul upward till it touch Thy feet!  
Or lift it only,—not to seem too proud,—  
To the low height of some good angel's  
feet,

For such to tread on when he walketh  
straight

And Thy lips praise him.

CHRIST. Spirits of the earth,  
I meet you with rebuke for the reproach  
And cruel and unmitigated blame  
Ye cast upon your masters. True, they  
have sinned;

And true their sin is reckoned into loss  
For you the sinless. Yet, your innocence,  
Which of you praises? since God made  
your acts

Inherent in your lives, and bound your  
hands

With instincts and imperious sanctities  
From self-defacement? Which of you  
disdains

These sinners who in falling proved  
their height

Above you by their liberty to fall?

And which of you complains of loss by  
them,

For whose delight and use ye have your  
life

And honour in creation? Ponder it!

This regent and sublime Humanity,  
Though fallen, exceeds you! this shall  
film your sun,

Shall hunt your lightning to its lair of  
cloud,

Turn back your rivers, footpath all your  
seas,

Lay flat your forests, master with a look  
Your lion at his fasting, and fetch down  
Your eagle flying. Nay, without this law  
Of mandom, ye would perish,—beast by  
beast

Devouring,—tree by tree, with strang-  
ling roots

And trunks set tuskwise. Ye would  
gaze on God

With imperceptive blankness up the stars,  
And mutter, 'Why, God, hast Thou made  
us thus?'

And pining to a sallow idiocy  
Stagger up blindly against the ends of  
life,

Then stagnate into rottenness and drop  
Heavily—poor, dead matter—piecemeal  
down

The abysmal spaces—like a little stone  
Let fall to chaos. Therefore over you  
Receive man's sceptre,—therefore be  
content

To minister with voluntary grace  
And melancholy pardon, every rite  
And function in you, to the human hand.

Be ye to man as angels are to God,  
Servants in pleasure, singers of delight,  
Suggesters to his soul of higher things  
Than any of your highest. So at last,  
He shall look round on you with lids too  
straight

To hold the grateful tears, and thank you  
well,

And bless you when he prays his secret  
prayers,

And praise you when he sings his open  
songs

For the clear song-note he has learnt in  
you,

Of purifying sweetness, and extend  
Across your head his golden fantasies

Which glorify you into soul from sense!  
Go, serve him for such price. That not

in vain

Nor yet ignobly ye shall serve, I place  
My word here for an oath, mine oath for  
act

To be hereafter. In the name of which  
Perfect redemption and perpetual grace,  
I bless you through the hope and through  
the peace

Which are mine,—to the Love, which is  
myself.

Eve. Speak on still, Christ. Albeit Thou  
bless me not

In set words, I am blessed in hearkening  
Thee—

Speak, Christ.

CHRIST. Speak, Adam. Bless the woman, man—  
It is thine office.

Adam. Mother of the world,  
Take heart before this Presence. Lo,  
my voice,  
Which, naming erst the creatures, did  
express  
(God breathing through my breath) the  
attributes

And instincts of each creature in its name,  
Floats to the same afflatus,—floats and  
heaves

Like a water-weed that opens to a wave,  
A full-leaved prophecy affecting thee,  
Outfairly and wide. Henceforward, rise,  
aspire

To all the calms and magnanimities,  
The lofty uses and the noble ends,  
The sanctified devotion and full work,  
To which thou art elect for evermore,  
First woman, wife, and mother.

Eve. And first in sin.

Adam. And also the sole bearer of  
the Seed

Whereby sin dieth! raise the majesties  
Of thy disconsolate brows, O well-  
beloved,

And front with level eyelids the To come,  
And all the dark o' the world. Rise,  
woman, rise

To thy peculiar and best altitudes  
Of doing good and of enduring ill,  
Of comforting for ill, and teaching good,  
And reconciling all that ill and good  
Unto the patience of a constant hope,—  
Rise with thy daughters! If sin came  
by thee,

And by sin, death,—the ransom-right-  
eousness,

The heavenly life and compensative rest  
Shall come by means of thee. If woe by  
thee

Had issue to the world, thou shalt go forth  
An angel of the woe thou didst achieve,  
Found acceptable to the world instead  
Of others of that name, of whose bright  
steps

Thy deed stripped bare the hills. Be  
satisfied;

Something thou hast to bear through  
womanhood,

Peculiar suffering answering to the sin,—

Some pang paid down for each new  
human life,

Some weariness in guarding such a life,  
Some coldness from the guarded, some  
mistrust

From those thou hast too well served,  
from those beloved

Too loyally some treason; feebleness  
Within thy heart, and cruelty without,  
And pressures of an alien tyranny

With its dynastic reasons of larger bones  
And stronger sinews. But, go to! thy love  
Shall chant itself its own beatitudes  
After its own life-working. A child's kiss  
Set on thy sighing lips, shall make thee  
glad;

A poor man served by thee, shall make  
thee rich;

A sick man helped by thee, shall make  
thee strong;

Thou shalt be served thyself by every  
sense

Of service which thou renderest. Such  
a crown

I set upon thy head,—Christ witnessing  
With looks of prompting love—to keep  
thee clear

Of all reproach against the sin foregone,  
From all the generations which succeed.

Thy hand which plucked the apple, I  
clasp close,

Thy lips which spake wrong counsel,  
I kiss close,

I bless thee in the name of Paradise  
And by the memory of Edenic joys

Forfeit and lost,—by that last cypress  
tree,

Green at the gate, which thrilled as we  
came out,

And by the blessed nightingale which  
threw

Its melancholy music after us,—  
And by the flowers, whose spirits full of  
smells

Did follow softly, plucking us behind  
Back to the gradual banks and vernal  
bowers

And fourfold river-courses.—By all these,  
I bless thee to the contraries of these,

I bless thee to the desert and the thorns,  
To the elemental change and turbulence,

And to the roar of the estranged beasts,  
And to the solemn dignities of grief,—

To each one of these ends,—and to their  
END

Of Death and the hereafter!

*Eve.*

I accept

For me and for my daughters this high  
part

Which lowly shall be counted. Noble  
work

Shall hold me in the place of garden-rest,  
And in the place of Eden's lost delight  
Worthy endurance of permitted pain;

While on my longest patience there shall  
wait

Death's speechless angel, smiling in the  
east

Whence cometh the cold wind. I bow  
myself

Humbly henceforward on the ill I did,  
That humbleness may keep it in the  
shade.

Shall it be so? shall I smile, saying so?  
O seed! O King! O God, who *shall* be  
seed,—

What shall I say? As Eden's fountain  
swelled

Brightly betwixt their banks, so swells  
my soul

Betwixt thy love and power!

And, sweetest thoughts  
Of foregone Eden! now, for the first time  
Since God said 'Adam,' walking through  
the trees,

I dare to pluck you as I plucked erewhile  
The lily or pink, the rose or heliotrope.  
So pluck I you—so largely—with both  
hands,

And throw you forward on the outer earth  
Wherein we are cast out, to sweeten it.

*Adam.* As Thou, Christ, to illumine it,  
holdest Heaven

Broadly above our heads.

[*The CHRIST is gradually transfigured  
during the following phrases of dia-  
logue, into humanity and suffering.*

*Eve.*

O Saviour Christ,

Thou standest mute in glory, like the sun.

*Adam.* We worship in Thy silence,  
Saviour Christ.

*Eve.* Thy brows grow grander with a  
forecast woe,—

Diviner, with the possible of death!

We worship in Thy sorrow, Saviour  
Christ.

*Adam.* How do Thy clear, still eyes  
transpierce our souls,

As gazing *through* them toward the  
Father-throne

In a pathetic, full Deity,  
Serenely as the stars gaze through the air  
Straight on each other.

*Eve.* O pathetic Christ,  
Thou standest mute in glory, like the  
moon.

*CHRIST.* Eternity stands always fronting  
God;

A stern colossal image, with blind eyes  
And grand dim lips that murmur ever-  
more

God, God, God! while the rush of life  
and death,

The roar of act and thought, of evil and  
good,

The avalanches of the ruining worlds  
Tolling down space,—the new worlds'  
genesis

Budding in fire,—the gradual humming  
growth

Of the ancient atoms and first forms of  
earth,

The slow procession of the swathing seas  
And firmamental waters,—and the noise  
Of the broad, fluent strata of pure airs,—  
All these flow onward in the intervals  
Of that reiterated sound of—God!

Which word, innumerable angels straight-  
way lift

Wide on celestial altitudes of song  
And choral adoration, and then drop

The burden softly, shutting the last notes  
In silver wings. Howbeit in the noon  
of time

Eternity shall wax as dumb as Death,  
While a new voice beneath the spheres  
shall cry,

God! why hast Thou forsaken me, my  
God?

And not a voice in Heaven shall answer it.

[*The transfiguration is complete in sadness.*

*Adam.* Thy speech is of the Heaven-  
lies, yet, O Christ,

Awfully human are Thy voice and face.

*Eve.* My nature overcomes me from  
Thine eyes.

CHRIST. In the set noon of time, shall  
one from Heaven,  
An angel fresh from looking upon God,  
Descend before a woman, blessing her  
With perfect benediction of pure love,  
For all the world in all its elements,  
For all the creatures of earth, air, and sea,  
For all men in the body and in the soul,  
Unto all ends of glory and sanctity.

Eve. O pale, pathetic Christ—I worship Thee!

I thank Thee for that woman!

CHRIST. Then, at last,  
I, wrapping round me your humanity,  
Which being sustained, shall neither  
break nor burn

Beneath the fire of Godhead, will tread  
earth,  
And ransom you and it, and set strong  
peace

Betwixt you and its creatures. With  
my pangs

I will confront your sins; and since  
those sins

Have sunken to all Nature's heart from  
yours,

The tears of my clean soul shall follow  
them

And set a holy passion to work clear  
Absolute consecration. In my brow  
Of kingly whiteness, shall be crowned  
anew

Your discrowned human nature. Look  
on me!

As I shall be uplifted on a cross  
In darkness of eclipse and anguish dread,  
So shall I lift up in my pierced hands,  
Not into dark, but light—not unto death,  
But life,—beyond the reach of guilt and  
grief,

The whole creation. Henceforth in my  
name

Take courage, O thou woman,—man,  
take hope!

Your grave shall be as smooth as Eden's  
sward,

Beneath the steps of your prospective  
thoughts,

And, one step past it, a new Eden-gate  
Shall open on a hinge of harmony  
And let you through to mercy. Ye shall  
fall

No more, within that Eden, nor pass out

Any more from it. In which hope, move  
on,

First sinners and first mourners. Live  
and love,—

Doing both nobly, because lowly.

Live and work, strongly, because  
patiently.

And, for the deed of death, trust it to God  
That it be well done, unrepented of,

And not to loss. And thence, with con-  
stant prayers

Fasten your souls so high, that constantly  
The smile of your heroic cheer may float

Above all floods of earthly agonies,  
Purification being the joy of pain.

[The vision of CHRIST vanishes. ADAM  
and EVE stand in an ecstasy. The  
earth-zodiac pales away shade by shade,  
as the stars, star by star, shine out in  
the sky; and the following chant from  
the two Earth Spirits (as they sweep  
back into the zodiac and disappear  
with it) accompanies the process of  
change.

#### Earth Spirits.

By the mighty word thus spoken

Both for living and for dying,

We, our homage-oath once broken,

Fasten back again in sighing,

And the creatures and the elements renew  
their covenanting.

Here, forgive us all our scorning;

Here, we promise milder duty:

And the evening and the morning

Shall reorganize in beauty

A sabbath day of sabbath joy, for uni-  
versal chanting.

And if, still, this melancholy

May be strong to overcome us,

If this mortal and unholy

We still fail to cast out from us,—

If we turn upon you, unaware, your own  
dark influences,—

If ye tremble when surrounded

By our forest pine and palm-trees,

If we cannot cure the wounded

With our gum-trees and our balm-  
trees,

And if your souls all mournfully sit down  
among your senses,—

Yet, O mortals, do not fear us,  
We are gentle in our languor;  
Much more good ye shall have near us  
Than any pain or anger,  
And our God's refracted blessing in our  
blessing shall be given.

By the desert's endless vigil  
We will solemnize your passions,  
By the wheel of the black eagle  
We will teach you exaltations,  
When he sails against the wind, to the  
white spot up in Heaven.

Ye shall find us tender nurses  
To your weariness of nature,  
And our hands shall stroke the curse's  
Dreary furrows from the creature.  
Till your bodies shall lie smooth in death,  
and straight and slumberful.

Then, a couch we will provide you  
Where no summer heats shall dazzle,  
Strewing on you and beside you  
Thyme and rosemary and basil—  
And the yew-tree shall grow overhead  
to keep all safe and cool.

Till the Holy Blood awaited  
Shall be chrism around us running,  
Whereby, newly-consecrated  
We shall leap up in God's sunning,  
To join the spheric company which  
purer worlds assemble.

While, renewed by new evangels,  
Soul-consummated, made glorious,  
Ye shall brighten past the angels,  
Ye shall kneel to Christ victorious,  
And the rays around His feet beneath  
your sobbing lips shall tremble.

[*The fantastic vision has all passed; the  
earth-zodiac has broken like a belt,  
and is dissolved from the desert. The  
Earth Spirits vanish, and the stars  
shine out above.*]

#### CHORUS OF INVISIBLE ANGELS

*while ADAM and EVE advance into the  
desert, hand in hand.*

Hear our heavenly promise  
Through your mortal passion!  
Love, ye shall have from us,  
In a pure relation.

As a fish or bird  
Swims or flies, if moving,  
We unseen are heard  
To live on by loving.  
Far above the glances  
Of your eager eyes,  
Listen! we are loving!  
Listen, through man's ignorances,  
Listen, through God's mysteries,  
Listen down the heart of things,—  
Ye shall hear our mystic wings  
Murmurous with loving.  
Through the opal door  
Listen evermore  
How we live by loving.

#### *First semichorus.*

When your bodies therefore  
Reach the grave their goal,  
Softly will we care for  
Each enfranchised soul.  
Softly and unloathly  
Through the door of opal  
Toward the Heavenly people,  
Floated on a minor fine  
Into the full chant divine,  
We will draw you smoothly,—  
While the human in the minor  
Makes the harmony diviner.  
Listen to our loving!

#### *Second semichorus.*

There, a sough of glory  
Shall breathe on you as you come,  
Ruffling round the doorway  
All the light of angelhood.  
From the empyrean centre  
Heavenly voices shall repeat,  
'Souls redeemed and pardoned, enter,  
For the chrism on you is sweet.'  
And every angel in the place  
Lowly shall bow his face,  
Folded fair on softened sounds,  
Because upon your hands and feet  
He images his Master's wounds.  
Listen to our loving!

#### *First semichorus.*

So, in the universe's  
Consummated undoing,  
Our seraphs of white mercies  
Shall hover round the ruin!  
Their wings shall stream upon the flame  
As if incorporate of the same

In elemental fusion,  
And calm their faces shall burn out  
With a pale and mastering thought,  
And a steadfast looking of desire  
From out between the clefts of fire,—  
While they cry, in the Holy's name,  
To the final Restitution.  
Listen to our loving!

*Second semichorus.*

So, when the day of God is  
To the thick graves accompted,  
Awaking the dead bodies  
The angel of the trumpet  
Shall split and shatter the earth  
To the roots of the grave  
Which never before were slackened,  
And quicken the charnel birth  
With his blast so clear and brave,  
That the Dead shall start and stand  
erect,  
And every face of the burial-place  
Shall the awful, single look reflect,  
Wherewith he them awakened.  
Listen to our loving!

*First semichorus.*

But wild is the horse of Death.  
He will leap up wild at the clamour  
Above and beneath.  
And where is his Tamer  
On that last day,  
When he crieth, Ha, ha!  
To the trumpet's blare,  
And paweth the earth's Aceldama?  
When he tosseth his head,  
The dear-white steed,  
And ghastlyly champeth the last moon-  
ray,—  
What angel there  
Can lead him away,  
That the living may rule for the Dead?

*Second semichorus.*

Yet a TAMER shall be found!  
One more bright than seraph crowned,  
And more strong than cherub bold,  
Elder, too, than angel old,  
By his grey eternities.  
He shall master and surprise  
The steed of Death.  
For He is strong, and He is fain.

He shall quell him with a breath,  
And shall lead him where He will,  
With a whisper in the ear,  
Full of fear—  
And a hand upon the mane,  
Grand and still.

*First semichorus.*

Through the flats of Hades where the  
souls assemble  
He will guide the Death-steed calm  
between their ranks,  
While, like beaten dogs, they a little  
moan and tremble  
To see the darkness curdle from the  
horse's glittering flanks.  
Through the flats of Hades where the  
dreary shade is,  
Up the steep of Heaven, will the Tamer  
guide the steed,—  
Up the spheric circles—circle above  
circle,  
We who count the ages, shall count the  
tolling tread—  
Every hoof-fallstriking a blinder, blanker  
sparkle  
From the stony orbs, which shall show  
as they were dead.

*Second semichorus.*

All the way the Death-steed with tolling  
hoofs shall travel,  
Ashen grey the planets shall be motion-  
less as stones,  
Loosely shall the systems eject their  
parts coeval,—  
Stagnant in the spaces, shall float the  
pallid moons.  
Suns that touch their apogees, reeling  
from their level,  
Shall run back on their axles, in wild,  
low, broken tunes.

*Chorus.*

Up against the arches of the crystal  
ceiling,  
From the horse's nostrils shall steam the  
blurting breath.  
Up between the angels pale with silent  
feeling,  
Will the Tamer, calmly, lead the horse  
of Death.

*Semichorus.*

Cleaving all that silence, cleaving all  
that glory,  
Will the Tamer lead him straightway to  
the Throne;  
'Look out, O Jehovah, to this I bring  
before Thee  
With a hand nail-pierced,—I, who am  
Thy Son.'  
Then the Eye Divinest, from the Deepest,  
flaming,  
On the mystic courser, shall look out in  
fire.  
Blind the beast shall stagger where It  
overcame him,  
Meek as lamb at pasture—bloodless in  
desire.  
Down the beast shall shiver,—slain amid  
the taming,—  
And, by Life essential, the phantasm  
Death expire.

*Chorus.*

Listen, man, through life and death,  
Through the dust and through the breath,  
Listen down the heart of things!  
Ye shall hear our mystic wings  
Murmurous with loving.

*A Voice from below.* Gabriel, thou  
Gabriel!

*A Voice from above.* What wouldst  
thou with me?

*First Voice.* I heard thy voice sound  
in the angels' song,

And I would give thee question.

*Second Voice.* Question me.

*First Voice.* Why have I called thrice  
to my Morning Star

And had no answer? All the stars are  
out,

And answer in their places. Only in vain  
I cast my voice against the outer rays  
Of my Star, shut in light behind the  
sun.

No more reply than from a breaking  
string,

Breaking when touched. Or is she not  
my Star?

Where is my Star—my Star? Have ye  
cast down

Her glory like my glory? has she waxed  
Mortal, like Adam? has she learnt to  
hate

Like any angel?

*Second Voice.* She is sad for thee.  
All things grow sadder to thee, one by  
one.

*Angel Chorus.*

Live, work on, O Earthy!

By the Actual's tension,

Speed the arrow worthy

Of a pure ascension.

From the low earth round you,

Reach the heights above you!

From the stripes that wound you,

Seek the loves that love you!

God's divinest burneth plain

Through the crystal diaphane

Of our loves that love you.

*First Voice.* Gabriel, O Gabriel!

*Second Voice.* What wouldst thou  
with me?

*First Voice.* Is it true, O thou Gabriel,  
that the crown  
Of sorrow which I claimed, another  
claims?

That HE claims THAT too?

*Second Voice.* Lost one, it is true.

*First Voice.* That HE will be an exile  
from His Heaven,

To lead those exiles homeward?

*Second Voice.* It is true.

*First Voice.* That HE will be an exile  
by His will,

As I by mine election?

*Second Voice.* It is true.

*First Voice.* That I shall stand sole  
exile finally,—

Made desolate for fruition?

*Second Voice.* It is true.

*First Voice.* Gabriel!

*Second Voice.* I hearken.

*First Voice.* Is it true besides—  
Aright true—that mine orient Star will  
give

Her name of 'Bright and Morning-Star'  
to Him,—

And take the fairness of His virtue  
back,

To cover loss and sadness?

*Second Voice.* It is true.

*First Voice.* Untrue, Untrue! O  
Morning-Star, O MINE,  
Who sittest secret in a veil of light  
Far up the starry spaces, say—*Untrue.*

Speak but so loud as doth a wasted moon  
To Tyrrhene waters. I am Lucifer.

[*A pause. Silence in the stars.*  
All things grow sadder to me, one by one.

*Angel Chorus.*

Exiled human creatures,  
Let your hope grow larger  
Larger grows the vision  
Of the new delight.  
From this chain of Nature's  
God is the Discharger,  
And the Actual's prison  
Opens to your sight.

*Semichorus.*

Calm the stars and golden,  
In a light exceeding :  
What their rays have measured,  
Let your feet fulfil !  
These are stars beholden  
By your eyes in Eden,  
Yet, across the desert,  
See them shining still.

*Chorus.*

Future joy and far light  
Working such relations,  
Hear us singing gently  
*Exiled is not lost.*  
God, above the starlight,  
God, above the patience,  
Shall at last present ye  
Guerdons worth the cost.  
Patiently enduring,  
Painfully surrounded,  
Listen how we love you,  
Hope the uttermost.  
Waiting for that curing  
Which exalts the wounded,  
Hear us sing above you—  
EXILED, BUT NOT LOST !

[*The stars shine on brightly, while  
ADAM and EVE pursue their way into  
the far wilderness. There is a sound  
through the silence, as of the falling  
tears of an angel.*

## PROMETHEUS BOUND

FROM THE GREEK OF AESCHYLUS

### PREFACE TO THE FIRST EDITION, 1833

ALTHOUGH, among the various versions which have appeared of various ancient writers, we may recognize the dead, together with much of the living letter; a literal version, together with a transfusion of poetical spirit;—why should we, on that account, consider ourselves charmed away from attempting another translation? A mirror may be held in different lights by different hands; and, according to the position of those hands, will the light fall. A picture may be imitated in different ways,—by steel engraving, or stone engraving; and, according to the vocation of the artist, will the copy be. According to Dr. Bentley, Pope's translation of Homer is not Homer; it is Spondanus: he might have said, it is not even Spondanus—it is Pope. Cowper's translation is a different

Homer altogether; not Spondanus, nor Pope, nor the right Homer either. We do not blame Pope and Cowper for not having faithfully represented Homer: we do not blame Pope and Cowper for being Pope and Cowper. It is the nature of the human mind to communicate its own character to whatever substance it conveys, whether it convey metaphysical impressions from itself to another mind, or literary compositions from one to another language. It is therefore desirable that the same composition should be conveyed by different minds, that the character of the medium may not be necessarily associated with the thing conveyed. All men, since Aesop's time and before it, have worn various-coloured spectacles. They cannot part with their colour, which is

their individuality; but they may correct the effects of that individuality by itself. If Potter show us Aeschylus through green spectacles, and another translator, though in a very inferior manner, show us Aeschylus through yellow ones, it will become clear to the English reader that green and yellow are not inherent properties of the Greek poet: and in this respect, both the English reader and the Greek poet are benefited.

But the present age says, it has no need of translations from classic authors. It is, or it would be, an original age: it will not borrow thoughts with long genealogies, nor walk upon a *pavé*, nor wear a costume, like Queen Anne's authors and the French dramatists. Its poetry shall not be cold and polished and imitative poetry; but shall dream undreamt of dreams, and glow with an unearthly frenzy. If its dreams be noble dreams, may they be dreamt on; if its frenzy be the evidence of inspiration, 'may I,' as Prometheus says, 'be mad.' But let the age take heed: there is one step from dreaming nobly to sleeping inertly; and one, from frenzy to imbecility.

I do not ask, I would not obtain, that our age should be servilely imitative of any former age. Surely it may think its own thoughts and speak its own words, yet not turn away from those who *have* thought and spoken well. The contemplation of excellence produces excellence, if not similar, yet parallel. We do not turn from green hills and waving forests, because we build and inhabit palaces; nor do we turn towards them, that we may model them in painted wax. We make them subjects of contemplation, in order to abstract from them those ideas of beauty, afterwards embodied in our own productions; and, above all, in order to consider their and our Creator under every manifestation of His goodness and His power. All beauties, whether in nature or art, whether in physics or morals, whether in composition or abstract reasoning, are multiplied reflections, visible in different distances and under different positions, of one archetypal beauty. If we owe gratitude to Him

who created and unveiled its form, should we refuse to gaze upon those reflections? Because they rest even upon heathen scrolls, should we turn away from those scrolls? Because thorns and briars are the product of the earth, should we avert our eyes from that earth? The mind of man and the earth of man are cursed alike.

But the age would not be 'classical.' 'Oh, that profaned name!' What does it mean, and what is it made to mean? It does not mean what it is made to mean: it does not mean what is necessarily regular, and polished, and unimpassioned. The ancients, especially the ancient Greeks, felt, and thought, and wrote antecedently to rules: they felt passionately, and thought daringly; and wrote because they felt and thought. Shakespeare is a more classical writer than Racine.

Perhaps, of all the authors of antiquity, no one stands so forward to support this hypothesis as Aeschylus: and of all the works of Aeschylus, no one stands more forward to support it than his work of the *Prometheus Bound*. He is a fearless and impetuous, not a cautious and accomplished poet. His excellences could not be acquired by art, nor could his defects exist separately from genius. It would be nearly equally impossible for the mere imitator to compass either; for if we would stand in the mist, we must stand also on the mountain. His excellences consist chiefly in a vehement imaginativeness, a strong but repressed sensibility, a high tone of morality, a fervency of devotion, and a rolling energetic diction: and as sometimes his fancy rushes in, where his judgement fears to tread, and language, even the most copious and powerful of languages, writhes beneath its impetuosity; an occasional mixing of metaphor, and frequent obscurity of style, are named among his chief defects. He is pompous too; sometimes; but his pomposity has not any modern, any rigid, frigid effect. When he walks, like his actors, on cothurni, we do not say 'how stiff he is!' but 'how majestic!'

Whether the *Prometheus* be, or be not, the finest production of its author, it will

not, I think, be contested, that Prometheus himself is the character in the conception and development of which its author has concentrated his powers in the most full and efficient manner. There is more gorgeousness of imagery in the *Seven Chiefs* and more power in the *Eumenides*; and I should tremble to oppose any one scene in *Prometheus* to the Cassandra scene in *Agamemnon*. The learned Mr. Boyd, who, in addition to many valuable and well-known translations, has furnished the public with an able version of that obscure tragedy, considers the scene in question to be 'unapproached and unapproachable by any rival.' But I would rest the claims of the *Prometheus* upon one fulcrum, the conception of character. It is not in the usual manner of Aeschylus to produce upon his canvas any very prominent figure, to which every other is made subordinate, and to which the interest of the spectator is very strongly and almost exclusively attached. Agamemnon's *πληγὴν ἔχω* we do not feel within our hearts. In the *Seven Chiefs*, there is a clear division of interest; and the reader willingly agrees with Antigone, that Polyneices should be as honourably buried as Eteocles. In the *Suppliants* we are called upon to exercise universal charity towards fifty heroines. In the *Persae*, we cannot weep with Atossa over the misfortunes of Xerxes; not even over what she most femininely considers to be his greatest misfortune—*μάλιστα δ' ἦδε συμφορὰ δάκνει*—his wearing a tattered garment. Perhaps we know more of Orestes than of any personage, always excepting Prometheus, introduced by Aeschylus: and yet both in the *Choëphorae* and *Eumenides* we are interested in his calamities, rather from their being calamities than from their being his. But Prometheus stands eminent and alone; one of the most original, and grand, and attaching characters ever conceived by the mind of man. That conception sank deeply into the soul of Milton, and, as has been observed, rose from thence in the likeness of his Satan. But the Satan of Milton and the Prometheus of Aeschylus stand upon ground as unequal as do the

sublime of sin and the sublime of virtue. Satan suffered from his ambition; Prometheus from his humanity: Satan for himself; Prometheus for mankind: Satan dared perils which he had not weighed; Prometheus devoted himself to sorrows which he had foreknown. 'Better to rule in hell,' said Satan; 'Better to serve this rock,' said Prometheus. But in his hell, Satan yearned to associate man; while Prometheus preferred a solitary agony: nay, he even permitted his zeal and tenderness for the peace of others to abstract him from that agony's intenseness.

Aeschylus felt the force of his own portraiture: he never removes his Prometheus from the spectator's sight. The readers of Aeschylus feel it: they are impatient at Io's long narrations; not because those narrations are otherwise than beautiful, but because they would hear Prometheus speak again: they are impatient even at Prometheus's prophetic replies to Io, because they would hear him speak only of Prometheus. From the moment of the first dawning of his character upon their minds, its effect is electrifying. He is silent: he disdains as much to answer the impotent and selfish compassion of Vulcan, as to murmur beneath the brutal cruelty of Strength. It was not thus that *he* pitied in his days of joy: it was not thus that *he* acted in his days of power: and his spirit is above them, and reckons not of them; and when their pity and their scoffs pollute his ears no more, he pours out his impassioned sorrows to the air, and winds, and waters, and earth, and sun, whom he had never visited with benefits, and 'taxed not with unkindness.' The striking nature of these, our first ideas of Prometheus, is not enfeebled by any subsequent ones. We see him daring and unflinching beneath the torturing and dishonouring hand, yet keenly alive to the torture and dishonour; for himself fearless and rash, yet for others considerate and wary; himself unpitied, yet to others pitiful. And when, at the last, he calls no longer upon the sun, and earth, and waters, from whom the Avenger is secluding him; but demands of Aether, who is rolling light to all

eyes excepting his, whether he beholds how he suffers by injustice;—our hearts rise up within us, and bear witness that the suffering is indeed unjust.

It is apparent with what bitter feeling the conceiver of this character must have regarded the transferred praise and love of Athens—of his country. 'Are you not ashamed,' said Menander to Philemon, 'to conquer me in comedy?' Such a reproach might Aeschylus have used to his dramatic rival, and extracted as deep a blush as ever stained Philemon's cheek. But he did not. Silent as his own Prometheus, he left for ever the Athens on whom he had conferred the immortality of his name and works; and went to Sicily, to die. In that place of exile he wrote his epitaph instead of tragedies, calling with his dying voice on the grove of Marathon<sup>1</sup> and the conquered Persians, as the only witnesses of his glory. 'If thorns be in thy path,' said Marcus Antoninus<sup>2</sup>, 'turn aside.' But where should *he* turn, who would avoid the ingratitude and changefulness of man?

Among those who have passed judgement upon Aeschylus, it is remarkable how many have passed a similar one to that of the Athenians, when, according to Suidas, they 'broke down the benches' previous to his departure for Sicily;—a phrase interpreted by Scaliger to signify a final condemnation of his work. He is 'damned by faint praise'; by an alternate acknowledgement of his genius, and censure of his taste; and by an invidious opposition to Sophocles and Euripides. Of the three great critics of antiquity,—Longinus, Dionysius of Halicarnassus, and Quintilian,—Dionysius alone does not measure his criticism to twice the length of his commendation. Quintilian calls him 'rudis in perisque et incompotus,' which

my sense of justice almost gives me courage to call a false criticism. Longinus—Longinus!! uses similar language:—*ἐνίοτε μέντοι ἀκατεργάστους καὶ οἰονεὶ ποκοειδεῖς τὰς ἐννοίας καὶ ἀμαλὰκτους φέροντος*. Now there are, undeniably, some things in Aeschylus, which, like the expressions of Callisthenes, would properly fall under the censure of Longinus, as being *οὐχ ὑψηλά, ἀλλὰ μετῴρωρα*. But according to every principle by which he himself could urge his immortal claim upon posterity, the Homer of criticism should have named with less of coldness and more of rapture, the Homer of dramatic poetry.

—With regard to the execution of this attempt, it is not necessary for me to say many words. I have rendered the iambics into blank verse, their nearest parallel; and the choral odes and other lyric intermixtures, into English lyrics, irregular and rimed. Irregularity I imagined to be indispensable to the conveyance of any part of the effect of the original measure, of which little seems to be understood by modern critics, than that it is irregular. To the literal sense I have endeavoured to bend myself as closely as was poetically possible: but if, after all,—and it is too surely the case,—*quantum mutatus!* must be applied; may the reader say so rather sorrowfully than severely, and forgive my English for not being Greek, and myself for not being Aeschylus.

And will Aeschylus forgive, among my many other offences against him, the grave offence of profaning his Prometheus, by attaching to it some miscellaneous poems by its translator<sup>3</sup>? Will he not rather retort upon me, his chorus's strongly expressed disapprobation of *unequal unions*? And how can I defend myself? *ἀπόλεμος ὅδε γ' ὁ πόλεμος*.

<sup>1</sup> See the epitaph which is attributed to him.

<sup>2</sup> Lib. viii. cap. 5.

<sup>3</sup> Printed in this edition among the 'Early Poems,' pp. 60-77.

# PROMETHEUS BOUND

## PERSONS OF THE DRAMA

PROMETHEUS.

OCEANUS.

HERMES.

HEPHAESTUS.

Io, daughter of Inachus.

STRENGTH and FORCE.

CHORUS of Ocean Nymphs.

SCENE.—STRENGTH and FORCE, HEPHAESTUS and PROMETHEUS, at the Rocks.

<p><i>Strength.</i> We reach the utmost limit of the earth, The Scythian track, the desert without man, And now, Hephaestus, thou must needs fulfil The mandate of our Father, and with links Indissoluble of adamantine chains, Fasten against this beetling precipice This guilty god. Because he filched away Thine own bright flower, the glory of plastic fire, And gifted mortals with it,—such a sin It doth behove he expiate to the gods, Learning to accept the empery of Zeus And leave off his old trick of loving man.</p> <p><i>Hephaestus.</i> O Strength and Force,— for you, our Zeus's will Presents a deed for doing, no more!— but I, I lack your daring, up this storm-rent chasm To fix with violent hands a kindred god,— Howbeit necessity compels me so That I must dare it—and our Zeus com- mands With a most inevitable word. Ho, thou! High-thoughted son of Themis who is sage! Thee loath, I loath must rivet fast in chains Against this rocky height unclomb by man, Where never human voice nor face shall find Out thee who lov'st them, and thy beauty's flower, Scorched in the sun's clear heat, shall fade away. Night shall come up with garniture of stars</p>	<p>To comfort thee with shadow, and the sun Disperse with retriect beams the morning- frosts, But through all changes, sense of present woe Shall vex thee sore, because with none of them There comes a hand to free. Such fruit is plucked From love of man!—and in that thou, a god, Didst brave the wrath of gods and give away Undue respect to mortals, for that crime Thou art adjudged to guard this joyless rock, Erect, unslumbering, bending not the knee, And many a cry and unavailing moan To utter on the air. For Zeus is stern, And new-made kings are cruel.</p> <p><i>Strength.</i> Be it so. Why loiter in vain pity? Why not hate A god the gods hate?—one too who be- trayed Thy glory unto men!</p> <p><i>Hephaestus.</i> An awful thing Is kinship joined to friendship.</p> <p><i>Strength.</i> Grant it be; Is disobedience to the Father's word A possible thing? Dost quail not more for that?</p> <p><i>Hephaestus.</i> Thou, at least, art a stern one! ever bold.</p> <p><i>Strength.</i> Why, if I wept, it were no remedy. And do not thou spend labour on the air To bootless uses.</p> <p><i>Hephaestus.</i> Cursed handicraft!</p>
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I curse and hate thee, O my craft!

*Strength.* Why hate  
Thy craft most plainly innocent of all  
These pending ills?

*Hephaestus.* I would some other hand  
Were here to work it!

*Strength.* All work hath its pain,  
Except to rule the gods. There is none  
free

Except King Zeus.

*Hephaestus.* I know it very well:  
I argue not against it.

*Strength.* Why not, then,  
Make haste and lock the fetters over him,  
Lest Zeus behold thee lagging?

*Hephaestus.* Here be chains.  
Zeus may behold these.

*Strength.* Seize him,—strike amain!  
Strike with the hammer on each side his  
hands—

Rivet him to the rock.

*Hephaestus.* The work is done,  
And thoroughly done.

*Strength.* Still faster grapple him,—  
Wedge him in deeper,—leave no inch  
to stir!

He's terrible for finding a way out  
From the irremediable.

*Hephaestus.* Here's an arm, at least,  
Grappled past freeing.

*Strength.* Now, then, buckle me  
The other securely. Let this wise one  
learn

He's duller than our Zeus.

*Hephaestus.* Oh, none but he  
Accuse me justly!

*Strength.* Now, straight through  
the chest,  
Take him and bite him with the clenching  
tooth

Of the adamant wedge, and rivet him.

*Hephaestus.* Alas, Prometheus, what  
thou sufferest here

I sorrow over.

*Strength.* Dost thou flinch again,  
And breathe groans for the enemies of  
Zeus?

Beware lest thine own pity find thee out.

*Hephaestus.* Thou dost behold a spec-  
tacle that turns

The sight o' the eyes to pity.

*Strength.* I behold  
A sinner suffer his sin's penalty.

But lash the thongs about his sides.

*Hephaestus.* So much  
I must do. Urge no farther than I must.

*Strength.* Aye, but I will urge!—and,  
with shout on shout,

Will hound thee at this quarry. Get  
thee down

And ring amain the iron round his legs.

*Hephaestus.* That work was not long  
doing.

*Strength.* Heavily now  
Let fall the strokes upon the perforant  
gyves:

For He who rates the work has a heavy  
hand.

*Hephaestus.* Thy speech is savage as  
thy shape.

*Strength.* Be thou  
Gentle and tender! but revile not me  
For the firm will and the untrunkling  
hate.

*Hephaestus.* Let us go. He is netted  
round with chains.

*Strength.* Here, now, taunt on! and  
having spoiled the gods  
Of honours, crown withal thy mortal men  
Who live a whole day out. Why how  
could they

Draw off from thee one single of thy  
griefs?

Methinks the Daemons gave thee a wrong  
name,

*Prometheus*, which means Providence,—  
because

Thou dost thyself need providence to see  
Thy roll and ruin from the top of doom.

*Prometheus (alone).* O holy Aether,  
and swift-winged Winds,  
And River-wells, and laughter innum-  
erous

Of yon sea-waves! Earth, mother of us  
all,

And all-viewing cyclic Sun, I cry on  
you,—

Behold me a god, what I endure from  
gods!

Behold, with throe on throe,  
How, wasted by this woe,

I wrestle down the myriad years of time!  
Behold, how fast around me,

The new King of the happy ones sublime  
Has flung the chain he forged, has shamed  
and bound me!

Woe, woe! to-day's woe and the coming  
morrow's,  
I cover with one groan. And where is  
found me

A limit to these sorrows!  
And yet what word do I say? I have  
foreknown

Clearly all things that should be; nothing  
done

Comes sudden to my soul—and I must  
bear

What is ordained with patience, being  
aware

Necessity doth front the universe  
With an invincible gesture. Yet this curse  
Which strikes me now, I find it hard to  
brave

In silence or in speech. Because I gave  
Honour to mortals, I have yoked my soul  
To this compelling fate. Because I stole  
The secret fount of fire, whose bubbles  
went

Over the ferule's brim, and manward sent  
Art's mighty means and perfect rudiment,  
That sin I expiate in this agony,  
Hung here in fetters, 'neath the blanching  
sky.

Ah, ah me! what a sound,  
What a fragrance sweeps up from a  
pinion unseen

Of a god, or a mortal, or nature between,  
Sweeping up to this rock where the earth  
has her bound,

To have sight of my pangs, or some  
guerdon obtain—

Lo, a god in the anguish, a god in the  
chain!

The god, Zeus hateth sore  
And his gods hate again,  
As many as tread on his glorified floor,  
Because I loved mortals too much ever-  
more.

Alas me! what a murmur and motion I  
hear,

As of birds flying near!  
And the air undersings  
The light stroke of their wings—  
And all life that approaches I wait for  
in fear.

*Chorus of Sea Nymphs, first strophe.*

Fear nothing! our troop  
Floats lovingly up

With a quick-oaring stroke  
Of wings steered to the rock,  
Having softened the soul of our father  
below!

For the gales of swift-bearing have sent  
me a sound,

And the clank of the iron, the malleted  
blow,

Smote down the profound  
Of my caverns of old,

And struck the red light in a blush from  
my brow,—

Till I sprang up unsandalled, in haste to  
behold,

And rushed forth on my chariot of wings  
manifest.

*Prometheus.* Alas me!—alas me!  
Ye offspring of Tethys who bore at her  
breast.

Many children, and eke of Oceanus,—he,  
Coiling still around earth with perpetual  
unrest!

Behold me and see  
How transfixed with the fang  
Of a fetter I hang

On the high-jutting rocks of this fissure,  
and keep

An uncoveted watch o'er the world and  
the deep.

*Chorus, first antistrophe.*

I behold thee, Prometheus—yet now,  
yet now,

A terrible cloud whose rain is tears  
Sweeps over mine eyes that witness how

Thy body appears  
Hung awaste on the rocks by infrangible  
chains!

For new is the Hand and the rudder that  
steers

The ship of Olympus through surge and  
wind—

And of old things passed, no track is  
behind.

*Prometheus.* Under earth, under Hades  
Where the home of the shade is,

All into the deep, deep Tartarus,  
I would he had hurled me adown!

I would he had plunged me, fastened thus  
In the knotted chain with the **savage**  
clang,

All into the dark, where there should be  
none,  
Neither god nor another, to laugh and  
see!  
But now the winds sing through and  
shake  
The hurtling chains wherein I hang,—  
And I, in my naked sorrows, make  
Much mirth for my enemy.

*Chorus, second strophe.*

Nay! who of the gods hath a heart so  
stern

As to use thy woe for a mock and mirth?  
Who would not turn more mild to learn  
Thy sorrows? who of the heaven and  
earth,

Save Zeus? But he

Right wrathfully

Bears on his sceptral soul unbent,  
And rules thereby the heavenly seed,  
Nor will he pause till he content  
His thirsty heart in a finished deed;

Or till Another shall appear,  
To win by fraud, to seize by fear  
The hard-to-be-captured government.

*Prometheus.* Yet even of ~~me~~ he shall  
have need,

That monarch of the blessed seed,  
Of me, of me, who now am cursed

By his fetters dire,—  
To wring my secret out withal  
And learn by whom his sceptre shall  
Be filched from him—as was, at first,  
His heavenly fire.

But he never shall enchant me  
With his honey-lipped persuasion!  
Never, never shall he daunt me

With the oath and threat of passion,  
Into speaking as they want me,  
Till he loose this savage chain,  
And accept the expiation  
Of my sorrow, in his pain.

*Chorus, second antistrophe.*

Thou art, sooth, a brave god,  
And, for all thou hast borne  
From the stroke of the rod,  
Nought relaxest from scorn!  
But thou speakest unto me  
Too free and unworn;  
And a terror strikes through me

And festers my soul  
And I fear, in the roll  
Of the storm, for thy fate  
In the ship far from shore!  
Since the son of Saturnius is hard in  
his hate  
And unmoved in his heart evermore.

*Prometheus.* I know that Zeus is stern.  
I know he metes his justice by his will.  
And yet, his soul shall learn  
More softness when once broken by this  
ill,—

And curbing his unconquerable vaunt  
He shall rush on in fear to meet with me  
Who rush to meet with him in agony,  
To issues of harmonious covenant.

*Chorus.* Remove the veil from all  
things and relate  
The story to us,—of what crime accused,  
Zeus smites thee with dishonourable  
pangs.

Speak! if to teach us do not grieve thy-  
self.

*Prometheus.* The utterance of these  
things is torture to me,  
But so, too, is their silence! each way lies  
Woe strong as fate.

When gods began with wrath,  
And war rose up between their starry  
brows,  
Some choosing to cast Chronos from his  
throne  
That Zeus might king it there, and some  
in haste

With opposite oaths that they would  
have no Zeus

To rule the gods for ever,—I, who brought  
The counsel I thought meetest, could not  
move

The Titans, children of the Heaven and  
Earth,

What time, disdaining in their rugged  
souls

My subtle machinations, they assumed  
It was an easy thing for force to take  
The mastery of fate. My mother, then,  
Who is called not only Themis but Earth  
too,

(Her single beauty joys in many names)  
Did teach me with reiterant prophecy  
What future should be,—and how con-  
quering gods

Should not prevail by strength and violence,

But by guile only. When I told them so, They would not deign to contemplate the truth

On all sides round,—whereat I deemed it best

To lead my willing mother upwardly, And set my Themis face to face with Zeus As willing to receive her. Tartarus, With its abysmal cloister of the Dark, Because I gave that counsel, covers up The antique Chronos and his siding hosts, And, by that counsel helped, the king of gods

Hath recompensed me with these bitter pangs!

For kingship wears a cancer at the heart,—

Distrust in friendship. Do ye also ask, What crime it is for which he tortures me—

That shall be clear before you. When at first

He filled his father's throne, he instantly Made various gifts of glory to the gods, And dealt the empire out. Alone of men,

Of miserable men, he took no count, But yearned to sweep their track off from the world,

And plant a newer race there. Not a god Resisted such desire except myself!

I dared it! I drew mortals back to light, From meditated ruin deep as hell!—

For which wrong, I am bent down in these pangs

Dreadful to suffer, mournful to behold,— And I, who pitied man, am thought myself

Unworthy of pity,—while I render out Deep rhythms of anguish 'neath the harping hand

That strikes me thus!—a sight to shame your Zeus!

*Chorus.* Hard as thy chains, and cold as all these rocks,

Is he, Prometheus, who withholds his heart

From joining in thy woe. I yearned before

To fly this sight—and, now I gaze on it, I sicken inwards.

*Prometheus.* To my friends, indeed, I must be a sad sight.

*Chorus.* And didst thou sin No more than so?

*Prometheus.* I did restrain besides My mortals from premeditating death.

*Chorus.* How didst thou medicine the plague-fear of death?

*Prometheus.* I set blind Hopes to inhabit in their house.

*Chorus.* By that gift, thou didst help thy mortals well.

*Prometheus.* I gave them also,—fire.

*Chorus.* And have they now, Those creatures of a day, the red-eyed fire?

*Prometheus.* They have! and shall learn by it, many arts.

*Chorus.* And, truly, for such sins Zeus tortures thee,

And will remit no anguish? Is there set No limit before thee to thine agony?

*Prometheus.* No other! only what seems good to HIM.

*Chorus.* And how will it seem good? what hope remains?

Seest thou not that thou hast sinned? But that thou hast sinned

It glads me not to speak of, and grieves thee—

Then let it pass from both! and seek thyself

Some outlet from distress.

*Prometheus.* It is in truth An easy thing to stand aloof from pain

And lavish exhortation and advice On one vexed sorely by it. I have known

All in prevision. By my choice, my choice,

I freely sinned—I will confess my sin— And helping mortals, found mine own despair.

I did not think indeed that I should pine Beneath such pangs against such skyey rocks,

Doomed to this drear hill and no neighbouring

Of any life!—but mourn not ye for griefs

I bear to-day!—hear rather, dropping down

To the plain, how other woes creep on to me,

And learn the consummation of my doom.  
Beseech you, nymphs, beseech you,  
grieve for me

Who now am grieving!—for Grief walks  
the earth,

And sits down at the foot of each by turns.

*Chorus.* We hear the deep clash of thy  
words,

Prometheus, and obey!

And I spring with a rapid foot away  
From the rushing car and the holy air,

• The track of birds—

And I drop to the rugged ground and  
there

Await the tale of thy despair.

*Enter OCEANUS.*

*Oceanus.* I reach the bourne of my weary  
road

Where I may see and answer thee,

Prometheus, in thine agony!

On the back of the quick-winged bird I  
glode,

And I bridled him in

With the will of a god!

Behold, thy sorrow aches in me,

Constrained by the force of kin.

Nay, though that tie were all undone,

For the life of none beneath the sun

Would I seek a larger benison

Than I seek for thine!

And thou shalt learn my words are  
truth,—

That no fair parlance of the mouth

Grows falsely out of mine.

Now give me a deed to prove my faith,—

For no faster friend is named in breath

Than I, Oceanus, am thine.

*Prometheus.* Ha! what has brought  
thee? Hast thou also come

To look upon my woe? How hast thou  
dared

To leave the depths called after thee,  
the caves

Self-hewn and self-roofed with spon-  
taneous rock,

To visit earth, the mother of my chain?

Hast come indeed to view my doom and  
mourn

That I should sorrow thus? Gaze on,  
and see

How I, the fast friend of your Zeus,—  
how I,

The erector of the empire in his hand,—  
Am bent beneath that hand, in this de-  
spair!

*Oceanus.* Prometheus, I behold,—and  
I would fain

Exhort thee, though already subtle  
enough,

To a better wisdom. Titan, know thyself,  
And take new softness to thy manners  
since

A new king rules the gods. If words  
like these,

Harsh words and trenchant, thou wilt  
fling abroad,

Zeus haply, though he sit so far and high,  
May hear thee do it, and so this wrath  
of his,

Which now affects thee fiercely, shall  
appear

A mere child's sport at vengeance.

Wretched god,

Rather dismiss the passion which thou  
hast,

And seek a change from grief. Perhaps  
I seem

To address thee with old saws and out-  
worn sense,—

Yet such a curse, Prometheus, surely  
waits

On lips that speak too proudly!—thou,  
meantime,

Art none the meeker, nor dost yield a jot  
To evil circumstance, preparing still

To swell the account of grief with other  
griefs

Than what are borne. Beseech thee,  
use me then

For counsel! do not spurn against the  
pricks,—

Seeing that who reigns, reigns by cruelty  
Instead of right. And now, I go from  
hence,

And will endeavour if a power of mine  
Can break thy fetters through. For thee,

—be calm,

And smooth thy words from passion.  
Knowest thou not

Of perfect knowledge, thou who knowest  
too much,

That where the tongue wags, ruin never  
lags?

*Prometheus.* I gratulate thee who hast  
shared and dared

All things with me, except their penalty!  
Enough so! leave these thoughts. It  
cannot be

That thou shouldst move Him. He may  
not be moved;

And *thou*, beware of sorrow on this road.

*Oceanus.* Aye! everwiser for another's  
use

Than thine! the event, and not the  
prophecy,

Attests it to me. Yet where now I rush,  
Thy wisdom hath no power to drag me  
back;

Because I glory, glory, to go hence  
And win for thee deliverance from thy  
pangs,

As a free gift from Zeus.

*Prometheus.* Why there, again,  
I give thee gratulation and applause!

Thou lackest no goodwill. But, as for  
deeds,

Do nought! 'twere all done vainly;  
helping nought,

Whatever thou wouldst do. Rather take  
rest,

And keep thyself from evil. If I grieve,  
I do not therefore wish to multiply

The griefs of others. Verily, not so!  
For still my brother's doom doth vex

my soul,—  
My brother Atlas, standing in the west,

Shouldering the column of the heaven  
and earth,

A difficult burden! I have also seen,  
And pitied as I saw, the earth-born one,

The inhabitant of old Cilician caves,  
The great war-monster of the hundred

heads  
(All taken and bowed beneath the violent

Hand),  
Typhon the fierce, who did resist the

gods,  
And, hissing slaughter from his dreadful

jaws,  
Flash out ferocious glory from his eyes,

As if to storm the throne of Zeus!  
Whereat,

The sleepless arrow of Zeus flew straight  
at him,—

The headlong bolt of thunder breathing  
flame,

And struck him downward from his  
eminence

Of exultation! Through the very soul  
It struck him, and his strength was  
withered up

To ashes, thunder-blasted. Now, he lies  
A helpless trunk supinely, at full length  
Beside the strait of ocean, spurred into  
By roots of Aetna—high upon whose tops  
Hephaestus sits and strikes the flashing  
ore.

From thence the rivers of fire shall burst  
away

Hereafter, and devour with savage jaws  
The equal plains of fruitful Sicily,  
Such passion he shall boil back in hot darts  
Of an insatiate fury and sough of flame,  
Fallen Typhon,—howsoever struck and  
charred

By Zeus's bolted thunder! But for thee,  
Thou art not so unlearned as to need  
My teaching—let thy knowledge save  
thyself.

I quaff the full cup of a present doom,  
And wait till Zeus hath quenched his  
will in wrath.

*Oceanus.* Prometheus, art thou igno-  
rant of this,—

That words do medicine anger?

*Prometheus.* If the word  
With seasonable softness touch the soul,

And, where the parts are ulcerous, sear  
them not

By any rudeness.

*Oceanus.* With a noble aim  
To dare as nobly—is there harm in *that*?

Dost thou discern it? Teach me.  
*Prometheus.* I discern

Vain aspiration,—unresolute work.

*Oceanus.* Then suffer me to bear the  
brunt of this!

Since it is profitable that one who is  
wise

Should seem not wise at all.

*Prometheus.* And such would seem  
My very crime.

*Oceanus.* In truth thine argument  
Sends me back home.

*Prometheus.* Lest any lament for me  
Should cast thee down to hate.

*Oceanus.* The hate of Him,  
Who sits a new king on the absolute  
throne!

*Prometheus.* Beware of him,—lest  
thine heart grieve by him.

*Oceanus.* Thy doom, Prometheus, be  
my teacher!

*Prometheus.* Go!

Depart—beware!—and keep the mind  
thou hast.

*Oceanus.* Thy words drive after, as I  
rush before—

Lo! my four-footed Bird sweeps smooth  
and wide

The flats of air with balanced pinions,  
glad

To bend his knee at home in the ocean-  
stall.

[*Exit OCEANUS.*]

*Chorus, first strophe.*

I moan thy fate, I moan for thee,  
Prometheus! From my eyestootender,  
Drop after drop incessantly

The tears of my heart's pity render  
My cheeks wet from their fountains  
free,—

Because that Zeus, the stern and cold,  
Whose law is taken from his breast,  
Uplifts his sceptre manifest  
Over the gods of old.

*First antistrophe.*

All the land is moaning  
With a murmured plaint to-day;  
All the mortal nations,  
Having habitations  
In the holy Asia,

Are a dirge intoning  
For thine honour and thy brothers',  
Once majestic beyond others  
In the old belief,—

Now are groaning in the groaning  
Of thy deep-voiced grief.

*Second strophe.*

Mourn the maids inhabitant  
Of the Colchian land,  
Who with white, calm bosoms, stand  
In the battle's roar!  
Mourn the Scythian tribes that haunt  
The verge of earth, Maeotis' shore.

*Second antistrophe.*

Yea! Arabia's battle crown,  
And dwellers in the beetling town

Mount Caucasus sublimely nears,—  
An iron squadron, thundering down  
With the sharp-prowed spears.

But one other before, have I seen to  
remain,

By invincible pain

Bound and vanquished,—one Titan!—  
'twas Atlas, who bears

In a curse from the gods, by that  
strength of his own

Which he evermore wears,

The weight of the heaven on his  
shoulder alone,

While he sighs up the stars!

And the tides of the ocean wail bursting  
their bars,—

Murmurs still the profound,—

And black Hades roars up through the  
chasm of the ground,—

And the fountains of pure-running rivers  
moan low

In a pathos of woe.

*Prometheus.* Beseech you, think not  
I am silent thus

Through pride or scorn! I only gnaw  
my heart

With meditation, seeing myself so  
wronged.

For so—their honours to these new-  
made gods,

What other gave but I,—and dealt them  
out

With distribution? Aye—but here I am  
dumb!

For here, I should repeat your know-  
ledge to you,

If I spake aught. List rather to the deeds  
I did for mortals!—how, being fools  
before,

I made them wise and true in aim of soul.  
And let me tell you—not astounding men,

But teaching you the intention of my gifts,  
How, first beholding, they beheld in vain,

And hearing, heard not, but, like shapes  
in dreams,

Mixed all things wildly down the tedious  
time,

Nor knew to build a house against the  
sun

With wicked sides, nor any woodcraft  
knew,

But lived, like silly ants, beneath the  
ground  
In hollow caves unsunned. There, came  
to them  
No steadfast sign of winter, nor of spring  
Flower-perfumed, nor of summer full  
of fruit,  
But blindly and lawlessly they did all  
things,  
Until I taught them how the stars do rise  
And set in mystery, and devised for them  
Number, the inducer of philosophies,  
The synthesis of Letters, and, beside,  
The artificer of all things, Memory,  
That sweet Muse-mother. I was first  
to yoke  
The servile beasts in couples, carrying  
An heirdom of man's burdens on their  
backs.  
I joined to chariots, steeds, that love the  
bit  
They champat—the chief pomp of golden  
ease!  
And none but I originated ships,  
The seaman's chariots, wandering on  
the brine  
With linen wings. And I—oh, miser-  
able!—  
Who did devise for mortals all these arts,  
Have no device left now to save myself  
From the woe I suffer.  
*Chorus.* Most unseemly woe  
Thou sufferest, and dost stagger from  
the sense,  
Bewildered! Like a bad leech falling sick  
Thou art faint at soul, and canst not find  
the drugs  
Required to save thyself.  
*Prometheus.* Hearken the rest,  
And marvel further—what more arts  
and means  
I did invent,—this, greatest!—if a man  
Fell sick, there was no cure, nor esculent  
Nor chrisim nor liquid, but for lack of  
drugs  
Men pined and wasted, till I showed  
them all  
Those mixtures of emollient remedies  
Whereby they might be rescued from  
disease.  
I fixed the various rules of mantic art,  
Discerned the vision from the common  
dream,

Instructed them in vocal auguries  
Hard to interpret, and defined as plain  
The wayside omens,—flights of crook-  
clawed birds,—  
Showed which are, by their nature,  
fortunate,  
And which not so, and what the food of  
each,  
And what the hates, affections, social  
needs,  
Of all to one another,—taught what sign  
Of visceral lightness, coloured to a shade,  
May charm the genial gods, and what  
fair spots  
Commend the lung and liver. Burning so  
The limbs encased in fat, and the long  
chine,  
I led my mortals on to an art abstruse,  
And cleared their eyes to the image in  
the fire,  
Erst filmed in dark. Enough said now  
of this.  
For the other helps of man hid under-  
ground,  
The iron and the brass, silver and gold,  
Can any dare affirm he found them out  
Before me? none, I know! unless he  
choose  
To lie in his vault. In one word learn  
the whole,—  
That all arts came to mortals from  
Prometheus.  
*Chorus.* Give mortals now no inex-  
pedient help,  
Neglecting thine own sorrow! I have  
hope still  
To see thee, breaking from the fetter  
here,  
Stand up as strong as Zeus.  
*Prometheus.* This ends not thus,  
The oracular Fate ordains. I must be  
bowed  
By infinite woes and pangs, to escape  
this chain.  
Necessity is stronger than mine art.  
*Chorus.* Who holds the helm of that  
Necessity?  
*Prometheus.* The threefold Fates and  
the unforgetting Furies.  
*Chorus.* Is Zeus less absolute than  
these are?  
*Prometheus.* Yea,  
And therefore cannot fly what is ordained.

*Chorus.* What is ordained for Zeus,  
except to be

A king for ever?

*Prometheus.* 'Tis too early yet  
For thee to learn it: ask no more.

*Chorus.* Perhaps  
Thy secret may be something holy?

*Prometheus.* Turn  
To another matter! this, it is not time  
To speak abroad, but utterly to veil  
In silence. For by that same secret kept,  
I 'scape this chain's dishonour and its  
woe.

*Chorus, first strophe.*

Never, oh never,  
May Zeus, the all-giver,  
Wrestle down from his throne  
In that might of his own  
To antagonize mine!  
Nor let me delay  
As I bend on my way  
Toward the gods of the shrine,  
Where the altar is full  
Of the blood of the bull,  
Near the tossing brine  
Of Ocean my father!

May no sin be sped in the word that is  
said,

But my vow be rather  
Consummated,  
Nor evermore fail, nor evermore pine.

*First antistrophe.*

'Tis sweet to have  
Life lengthened out  
With hopes proved brave  
By the very doubt,  
Till the spirit enfold  
Those manifest joys which were foretold!  
But I thrill to behold  
Thee, victim doomed,  
By the countless cares  
And the drear despairs,  
For ever consumed,—  
And all because thou, who art fearless  
now  
Of Zeus above,  
Didst overflow for mankind below  
With a free-souled, reverent love.

Ah friend, behold and see!  
What's all the beauty of humanity?  
Can it be fair?

What's all the strength?—is it strong?  
And what hope can they bear,  
These dying-livers—living one day long?  
Ah, seest thou not, my friend,  
How feeble and slow  
And like a dream, doth go  
This poor blind manhood, drifted from  
its end?  
And how no mortal wranglings can  
confuse  
The harmony of Zeus?

Prometheus, I have learnt these things  
From the sorrow in thy face.  
Another song did fold its wings  
Upon my lips in other days,  
When round the bath and round the bed  
The hymeneal chant instead  
I sang for thee, and smiled,—  
And thou didst lead, with gifts and  
vows,  
Hesione, my father's child,  
To be thy wedded spouse.

*Io enters.*

*Io.* What land is this? what people is  
here?  
And who is he that writhes, I see,  
In the rock-hung chain?  
Now what is the crime that hath brought  
thee to pain?  
Now what is the land—make answer  
free—  
Which I wander through, in my wrong  
and fear?  
Ah! ah! ah me!  
The gad-fly stingeth to agony!  
O Earth, keep off that phantasm pale  
Of earth-born Argus!—ah!—I quail  
When my soul describes  
That herdsman with the myriad eyes  
Which seem, as he comes, one crafty eye.  
Graves hide him not, though he should  
die,  
But he doggeth me in my misery  
From the roots of death, on high—on  
high—  
And along the sands of the siding deep,  
All famine-worn, he follows me,  
And his waxen reed doth undersound  
The waters round,  
And giveth a measure that giveth sleep.

Woe, woe, woe!  
 Where shall my weary course be done!—  
 What wouldst thou with me, Saturn's  
 son?  
 And in what have I sinned, that I should  
 go  
 Thus yoked to grief by thine hand for  
 ever?  
 Ah! ah! dost vex me so  
 That I madden and shiver,  
 Stung through with dread?  
 Flash the fire down, to burn me!  
 Heave the earth up, to cover me!  
 Or plunge me in the deep, with the salt  
 waves over me,  
 That the sea-beasts may be fed!  
 O king, do not spurn me  
 In my prayer!  
 For this wandering everlonger, ever-  
 more,  
 Hath overworn me,—  
 And I know not on what shore  
 I may rest from my despair.

*Chorus.* Hearest thou what the ox-  
 horned maiden saith?

*Prometheus.* How could I choose but  
 hearken what she saith,  
 The frenzied maiden! — Inachus's  
 child?—  
 Who love-warms Zeus's heart, and now  
 is lashed  
 By Heré's hate along the unending ways?

*Io.* Who taught thee to articulate that  
 name,—  
 My father's? Speak to his child,  
 By grief and shame defiled!  
 Who art thou, victim, thou—who dost  
 acclaim  
 Mine anguish in true words, on the wide  
 air?  
 And callest too by name the curse that  
 came  
 From Heré unaware,  
 To waste and pierce me with its mad-  
 dening goad?  
 Ah—ah—I leap  
 With the pang of the hungry—I bound  
 on the road—  
 I am driven by my doom—  
 I am overcome

By the wrath of an enemy strong and  
 deep!  
 Are any of those who have tasted pain,  
 Alas! as wretched as I?  
 Now tell me plain, doth aught remain  
 For my soul to endure beneath the sky?  
 Is there any help to be holpen by?  
 If knowledge be in thee, let it be said!  
 Cry aloud—cry  
 To the wandering, woful maid.

*Prometheus.* Whatever thou wouldst  
 learn I will declare,—  
 No riddle upon my lips, but such straight  
 words  
 As friends should use to each other  
 when they talk.  
 Thou seest Prometheus, who gave  
 mortals fire.  
*Io.* O common Help of all men, known  
 of all,  
 O miserable Prometheus, — for what  
 cause  
 Dost thou endure thus?

*Prometheus.* I have done with wail  
 For my own griefs—but lately.

*Io.* Wilt thou not  
 Vouchsafe the boon to me?

*Prometheus.* Say what thou wilt,  
 For I vouchsafe all.

*Io.* Speak then, and reveal  
 Who shut thee in this chasm.

*Prometheus.* The will of Zeus,  
 The hand of his Hephaestus.

*Io.* And what crime,  
 Dost expiate so?

*Prometheus.* Enough for thee I have  
 told,

In so much only.

*Io.* Nay—but show besides  
 The limit of my wandering, and the time  
 Which yet is lacking to fulfil my grief.

*Prometheus.* Why, not to know were  
 better than to know,

For such as thou.

*Io.* Beseech thee, blind me not  
 To that which I must suffer.

*Prometheus.* If I do,  
 The reason is not that I grudge a boon.

*Io.* What reason, then, prevents thy  
 speaking out?

*Prometheus.* No grudging! but a fear  
 to break thine heart.

*Io.* Less care for me, I pray thee!  
 Certainly,  
 I count for advantage.  
*Prometheus.* Thou wilt have it so,  
 And, therefore, I must speak. Now  
 hear—  
*Chorus.* Not yet.  
 Give half the guerdon my way. Let us  
 learn  
 First, what the curse is that befell the  
 maid,—  
 Her own voice telling her own wasting  
 woes :  
 The sequence of that anguish shall await  
 The teaching of thy lips.  
*Prometheus.* It doth behove  
 That thou, Maid *Io*, shouldst vouchsafe  
 to these  
 The grace they pray,—the more, be-  
 cause they are called  
 Thy father's sisters ! since to open out  
 And mourn out grief where it is possible  
 To draw a tear from the audience, is a  
 work  
 That pays its own price well.  
*Io.* I cannot choose  
 But trust you, nymphs, and tell you all  
 ye ask,  
 In clear words—though I sob amid my  
 speech  
 In speaking of the storm—curse sent from  
 Zeus,  
 And of my beauty, from which height  
 it took  
 Its swoop on me, poor wretch ! left thus  
 deformed  
 And monstrous to your eyes. For ever-  
 more  
 Around my virgin-chamber, wandering  
 went  
 The nightly visions' which entreated  
 me  
 With syllabled smooth sweetness.—  
 'Blessed maid,  
 Why lengthen out thy maiden hours  
 when fate  
 Permits the noblest spousal in the world ?  
 When Zeus burns with the arrow of thy  
 love,  
 And fain would touch thy beauty ?—  
 Maiden, thou  
 Despise not Zeus ! depart to Lerne's  
 mead

That's green around thy father's flocks  
 and stalls,  
 Until the passion of the heavenly Eye  
 Be quenched in sight.' Such dreams  
 did all night long  
 Constrain me—me, unhappy !—till I  
 dared  
 To tell my father how they trod the dark  
 With visionary steps. Whereat he sent  
 His frequent heralds to the Pythian fane,  
 And also to Dodona, and inquired  
 How best, by act or speech, to please  
 the gods.  
 Thesamereturning, brought back oracles  
 Of doubtful sense, indefinite response,  
 Dark to interpret ; but at last there came  
 To Inachus an answer that was clear,—  
 Thrown straight as any bolt, and spoken  
 out—  
 This—'he should drive me from my  
 home and land,  
 And bid me wander to the extreme  
 verge  
 Of all the earth—or, if he willed it not,  
 Should have a thunder with a fiery eye,  
 Leap straight from Zeus to burn up all  
 his race  
 To the last root of it.' By which Loxian  
 word  
 Subdued, he drove me forth, and shut  
 me out,  
 Heloath, meloath,—but Zeus's violent bit  
 Compelled him to the deed !—when  
 instantly  
 My body and soul were changed and  
 distraught,  
 And, hornèd as ye see, and spurred along  
 By the fanged insect, with a maniac leap  
 I rushed on to Cerchnea's limpid stream  
 And Lerne's fountain-water. There,  
 the earth-born,  
 The herdsman Argus, most immitigable  
 Of wrath, did find me out, and track me  
 out  
 With countless eyes, set staring at my  
 steps !—  
 And though an unexpected sudden doom  
 Drew him from life—I, curse-tormented  
 still,  
 Am driven from land to land before the  
 scourge  
 The gods hold o'er me. So, thou hast  
 heard the past,

And if a bitter future thou canst tell,  
Speak on! I charge thee, do not flatter me  
Through pity, with false words; for, in  
my mind,  
Deceiving works more shame than tor-  
turing doth.

*Chorus.*

Ah! silence here!  
Nevermore, nevermore,  
Would I languish for  
The stranger's word  
To thrill in mine ear!—  
Nevermore for the wrong and the woe  
and the fear  
So hard to behold,  
So cruel to bear,  
Piercing my soul with a double-edged  
sword  
Of a sliding cold!  
Ah Fate!—ah me!—  
I shudder to see  
This wandering maid in her agony.

*Prometheus.* Grief is too quick in thee,  
and fear too full.

Be patient till thou hast learnt the rest.

*Chorus.* Speak—teach!  
To those who are sad already, it seems  
sweet,  
By clear foreknowledge to make perfect,  
pain.

*Prometheus.* The boon ye asked me  
first was lightly won,—  
For first ye asked the story of this maid's  
grief

As her own lips might tell it. Now  
remains

To list what other sorrows she so young  
Must bear from Heré!—Inachus's child,  
O thou!—drop down thy soul my  
weighty words,

And measure out the landmarks which  
are set

To end thy wandering. Toward the  
orient sun

First turn thy face from mine, and jour-  
ney on

Along the desert flats, till thou shalt come  
Where Scythia's shepherd peoples dwell  
aloft,

Perched in wheeled wagons under  
woven roofs,

And twang the rapid arrow past the  
bow—

Approach them not; but siding in thy  
course,

The rugged shore-rocks resonant to the  
sea,

Depart that country. On the left hand  
dwell

The iron-workers, called the Chalybes,  
Of whom beware, for certes they are  
uncouth,

And nowise bland to strangers. Reach-  
ing so

The stream Hybristes (well the *scorned*  
called),

Attempt no passage,—it is hard to pass,—  
Or ere thou come to Caucasus itself,

That highest of mountains, where the  
river leaps

The precipice in his strength!—thou  
must toil up

Those mountain-tops that neighbour  
with the stars,

And tread the south way, and draw  
near, at last,

The Amazonian host that hateth man,  
Inhabitants of Themiscyra, close

Upon Thermodon, where the sea's rough  
jaw

Doth gnash at Salmydessa and provide  
A cruel host to seamen, and to ships

A stepdame. They with reluctant hand  
Shall lead thee on and on, till thou arrive

Just where the ocean-gates show nar-  
rowest

On the Cimmerian isthmus. Leaving  
which,

Behoves thee swim with fortitude of  
soul

The strait Maotis. Aye! and evermore  
That traverse shall be famous on men's

lips,  
That strait, called Bosphorus, the horned  
one's road,

So named because of thee, who so wilt  
pass

From Europe's plain to Asia's continent.  
How think ye, nymphs? the king of  
gods appears

Impartial in ferocious deeds? Behold!  
The god desirous of this mortal's love

Hath cursed her with these wanderings.  
Ah, fair child,

Thou hast met a bitter groom for bridal troth!

For all thou yet hast heard, can only prove  
The incompleated prelude of thy doom.

*Io.* Ah, Ah!

*Prometheus.* Is't thy turn, now, to shriek and moan?

How wilt thou, when thou hast hearkened what remains?

*Chorus.* Besides the grief thou hast told, can aught remain?

*Prometheus.* A sea—of foredoomed evil worked to storm.

*Io.* What boots my life, then? why not cast myself

Down headlong from this miserable rock,  
That, dashed against the flats, I may redeem

My soul from sorrow? Better once to die,  
Than day by day to suffer.

*Prometheus.* Verily,

It would be hard for thee to bear my woe  
For whom it is appointed not to die.

Death frees from woe: but I before me see  
In all my far prevision, not a bound

To all I suffer, ere that Zeus shall fall  
From being a king.

*Io.* And can it ever be  
That Zeus shall fall from empire?

*Prometheus.* Thou, methinks,  
Wouldst take some joy to see it.

*Io.* Could I choose?  
I, who endure such pangs, now, by that god!

*Prometheus.* Learn from me, therefore,  
that the event shall be.

*Io.* By whom shall his imperial sceptred hand

Be emptied so?

*Prometheus.* Himself shall spoil himself,

Through his idiotic counsels.

*Io.* How! declare!  
Unless the word bring evil.

*Prometheus.* He shall wed—  
And in the marriage-bond be joined to grief.

*Io.* A heavenly bride—or human?  
Speak it out,

If it be utterable.

*Prometheus.* Why should I say which?  
It ought not to be uttered, verily.

*Io.*

Then

It is his wife shall tear him from his throne!

*Prometheus.* It is his wife shall bear  
a son to him,

More mighty than the father.

*Io.* From this doom  
Hath he no refuge?

*Prometheus.* None—or ere that I,  
Loosed from these fetters—

*Io.* Yea—but who shall loose,  
While Zeus is adverse?

*Prometheus.* One who is born  
of thee,—

It is ordained so.

*Io.* What is this thou sayest!  
A son of mine shall liberate thee from woe?

*Prometheus.* After ten generations,  
count three more,

And find him in the third.

*Io.* The oracle  
Remains obscure.

*Prometheus.* And search it not to learn  
Thine own griefs from it.

*Io.* Point me not to a good,  
To leave me straight bereaved.

*Prometheus.* I am prepared  
To grant thee one of two things.

*Io.* But which two?  
Set them before me—grant me power  
to choose.

*Prometheus.* I grant it—choose now!  
shall I name aloud

What griefs remain to wound thee, or  
what hand

Shall save me out of mine?

*Chorus.* Vouchsafe, O god,  
The one grace of the twain to her who prays,

The next to me—and turn back neither  
prayer

Dishonour'd by denial. To herself  
Recount the future wandering of her feet;

Then point me to the looser of thy chain,  
Because I yearn to know him.

*Prometheus.* Since ye will,  
Of absolute will, this knowledge, I will set

No contrary against it, nor keep back

A word of all ye ask for. *Io*, first  
To thee I must relate thy wandering course

Far winding. As I tell it, write it down  
 In thy soul's book of memories. When  
     thou hast past  
 The affluent bound that parts two  
     continents,  
 Track on the footsteps of the orient sun  
 In his own fire—across the roar of seas,—  
 Fly till thou hast reached the Gorgonaeon  
     flats  
 Beside Cisthene. There, the Phorcides,  
 Three ancient maidens, live, with shape  
     of swan,  
 One tooth between them, and one com-  
     mon eye,  
 On whom the sun doth never look at all  
 With all his rays, nor evermore the moon,  
 When she looks through the night!  
     A near to whom  
 Are the Gorgon sisters three, en clothed  
     with wings,  
 With twisted snakes for ringlets, man-  
     abhorred—  
 There is no mortal gazes in their face,  
 And gazing can breathe on. I speak of  
     such  
 To guard thee from their horror. Aye!  
     and list  
 Another tale of a dreadful sight! beware  
 The Griffins, those unbarking dogs of  
     Zeus,  
 Those sharp-mouthed dogs!—and the  
     Arimaspian host  
 Of one-eyed horsemen, habiting beside  
 The river of Pluto that runs bright with  
     gold.  
 Approach them not, beseech thee.  
     Presently  
 Thou'lt come to a distant land, a dusky  
     tribe  
 Of dwellers at the fountain of the Sun,  
 Whence flows the river Aethiops; wind  
     along  
 Its banks and turn off at the cataracts,  
 Just as the Nile pours from the Byblis  
     hills  
 His holy and sweet wave!—his course  
     shall guide  
 Thine own to that triangular Nile-ground  
 Where, Io, is ordained for thee and  
     thine,  
 A lengthened exile. Have I said, in this,  
 Aught darkly or incompletely!—now  
     repeat

The question, make the knowledge fuller!  
     Lo,  
 I have more leisure than I covet, here.  
*Chorus.* If thou canst tell us aught  
     that's left untold,  
 Or loosely told, of her most dreary flight,  
 Declare it straight! but if thou hast  
     uttered all,  
 Grant us that latter grace for which we  
     prayed,  
 Remembering how we prayed it.  
*Prometheus.* She has heard  
 The uttermost of her wandering. There  
     it ends.  
 But that she may be certain not to have  
     heard  
 All vainly, I will speak what she endured  
 Ere coming hither, and invoke the past  
 To prove my prescience true. And  
     so—to leave  
 A multitude of words, and pass at once  
 To the subject of thy course!—When  
     thou hadst gone  
 To those Molossian plains which sweep  
     around  
 Dodona shouldering Heaven, whereby  
     the fane  
 Of Zeus Thesprotian keepeth oracle,  
 And, wonder past belief, where oaks do  
     wave  
 Articulate adjurations—(aye, the same  
 Saluted thee in no perplexed phrase  
 But clear with glory, noble wife of Zeus  
 That shouldst be, there,—some sweet-  
     ness took thy sense!)  
 Thou didst rush further onward,—stung  
     along  
 The ocean-shore, toward Rhea's mighty  
     bay,  
 And, tost back from it, was tost to it again  
 In stormy evolution!—and, know well,  
 In coming time that hollow of the sea  
 Shall bear the name Ionian, and present  
 A monument of Io's passage through,  
 Unto all mortals. Be these words the  
     signs  
 Of my soul's power to look beyond the veil  
 Of visible things. The rest, to you and  
     her,  
 I will declare in common audience,  
     nymphs,  
 Returning thither where my speech  
     brake off.

There is a town Canobus, built upon  
The earth's fair margin, at the mouth of  
Nile,

And on the mound washed up by it!—  
Io, there

Shall Zeus give back to thee thy perfect  
mind,

And only by the pressure and the touch  
Of a hand not terrible; and thou to Zeus  
Shalt bear a dusky son who shall be called  
Thence, Epaphus, Touched! That son  
shall pluck the fruit

Of all that land wide-watered by the flow  
Of Nile; but after him, when counting out  
As far as the fifth full generation, then  
Full fifty maidens, a fair woman-race,  
Shall back to Argos turn reluctantly,  
To fly the proffered nuptials of their kin,  
Their father's brothers. These being  
passion-struck,

Like falcons bearing hard on flying doves,  
Shall follow, hunting at a quarry of love  
They should not hunt—till envious  
Heaven maintain

A curse betwixt that beauty and their  
desire,

And Greece receive them, to be overcome  
In murderous woman-war, by fierce  
red hands

Kept savage by the night. For every  
wife

Shall slay a husband, dyeing deep in blood  
The sword of a double edge!—(I wish  
indeed

As fair a marriage-joy to all my foes!)  
One bride alone shall fail to smite to death  
The head upon her pillow, touched with  
love.

Made impotent of purpose, and impelled  
To choose the lesser evil,—shame on  
her cheeks,

To blood-guilt on her hands. Which  
bride shall bear

A royal race in Argos. Tedious speech  
Were needed to relate particulars  
Of these things—'tis enough that, from  
her seed,

Shall spring the strong He, famous with  
the bow,

Whose arm shall break my fetters off.  
Behold,

My mother Themis, that old Titaness,  
Delivered to me such an oracle,—

But how and when, I should be long to  
speak,  
And thou, in hearing, wouldst not gain  
at all.

*Io. Eleleu, eleleu!*

How the spasm and the pain  
And the fire on the brain

Strike, burning me through!

How the sting of the curse, all aflame  
as it flew,

Pricks me onward again!

How my heart, in its terror, is spurning  
my breast,

And my eyes, like the wheels of a chariot,  
roll round!

I am whirled from my course, to the  
east, to the west,

In the whirlwind of frenzy all madly  
inwound—

And my mouth is unbridled for anguish  
and hate,

And my words beat in vain, in wild  
storms of unrest,

On the sea of my desolate fate.

[*Io rushes out.*]

*Chorus. Strophe.*

Oh, wise was he, oh, wise was he,  
Who first within his spirit knew  
And with his tongue declared it true,  
That love comes best that comes unto  
The equal of degree!  
And that the poor and that the low  
Should seek no love from those above  
Whose souls are fluttered with the flow  
Of airs about their golden height,  
Or proud because they see arow  
Ancestral crowns of light.

*Antistrophe.*

Oh, never, never, may ye, Fates,  
Behold me with your awful eyes  
Lift mine too fondly up the skies  
Where Zeus upon the purple waits!—  
Nor let me step too near—too near—  
To any suitor, bright from heaven!  
Because I see—because I fear  
This loveless maiden vexed and laden  
By this fell curse of Heré, driven  
On wanderings dread and drear.

*Epode.*

Nay, grant an equal troth instead  
Of nuptial love, to bind me by!—

It will not hurt—I shall not dread  
To meet it in reply.

But let not love from those above  
Revert and fix me, as I said,

With that inevitable Eye!  
I have no sword to fight that fight—  
I have no strength to tread that path—  
I know not if my nature hath  
The power to bear,—I cannot see  
Whither, from Zeus's infinite,  
I have the power to flee.

*Prometheus.* Yet Zeus albeit most absolute of will,  
Shall turn to meekness—such a marriage rite

He holds in preparation, which anon  
Shall thrust him headlong from his gerent seat

Adown the abysmal void, and so the curse  
His father Chronos muttered in his fall,  
As he fell from his ancient throne and cursed,

Shall be accomplished wholly. No escape  
From all that ruin shall the filial Zeus  
Find granted to him from any of his gods,

Unless I teach him. I, the refuge, know,  
And I, the means.—Now, therefore, let him sit

And brave the imminent doom, and fix his faith

On his supernal noises, hurtling on  
With restless hand the bolt that breathes out fire—

For these things shall not help him, none of them,

Nor hinder his perdition when he falls  
To shame, and lower than patience.—  
Such a foe

He doth himself prepare against himself,  
A wonder of unconquerable Hate,  
An organizer of sublimer fire  
Than glares in lightnings, and of grander sound

Than aught the thunder rolls, out-thundering it,

With power to shatter in Poseidon's fist  
The trident-spear, which, while it plagues the sea,

Doth shake the shores around it. Aye, and Zeus,

Precipitated thus, shall learn at length

The difference betwixt rule and servitude.

*Chorus.* Thou makest threats for Zeus of thy desires.

*Prometheus.* I tell you, all these things shall be fulfilled,  
Even so as I desire them.

*Chorus.* Must we then  
Look out for one shall come to master Zeus?

*Prometheus.* These chains weigh lighter than his sorrows shall.

*Chorus.* How art thou not afraid to utter such words?

*Prometheus.* What should I fear, who cannot die?

*Chorus.* But *his*  
Can visit thee with dreder woe than death's.

*Prometheus.* Why let him do it!—I am here, prepared

For all things and their pangs.

*Chorus.* The wise are they  
Who reverence Adrasteia.

*Prometheus.* Reverence thou,  
Adore thou, flatter thou, whomever reigns,

Whenever reigning! but for me, your Zeus

Is less than nothing. Let him act and reign

His brief hour out according to his will—  
He will not, therefore, rule the gods too long.

But lo! I see that courier-god of Zeus,  
That new-made menial of the new-crowned king.

He doubtless comes to announce to us something new.

*HERMES enters.*

*Hermes.* I speak to thee, the sophist, the talker down

Of scorn by scorn, the sinner against gods,  
The reverencer of men, the thief of fire,—  
I speak to thee and adjure thee! Zeus requires

Thy declaration of what marriage rite  
Thus moves thy vaunt and shall hereafter cause

His fall from empire. Do not wrap thy speech

In riddles, but speak clearly! Never cast

Ambiguous paths, Prometheus, for my feet,  
 Since Zeus, thou may'st perceive, is scarcely won  
 To mercy by such means.

*Prometheus.* A speech well-mouthed  
 In the utterance, and full-minded in the sense,

As doth befit a servant of the gods!  
 New gods, ye newly reign, and think forsooth

Ye dwell in towers too high for any dart  
 To carry a wound there!—have I not stood by

While two kings fell from thence? and shall I not

Behold the third, the same who rules you now,

Fall, shamed to sudden ruin?—Do I seem  
 To tremble and quail before your modern gods?

Far be it from me!—For thyself, depart,  
 Re-tread thy steps in haste. To all thou hast asked

I answer nothing.

*Hermes.* Such a wind of pride  
 Impelled thee of yore full sail upon these rocks.

*Prometheus.* I would not barter—learn thou soothly that!—  
 My suffering for thy service. I maintain  
 It is a nobler thing to serve these rocks  
 Than live a faithful slave to father Zeus.  
 Thus upon scorers I retort their scorn.

*Hermes.* It seems that thou dost glory  
 in thy despair.

*Prometheus.* I glory? would my foes  
 did glory so,  
 And I stood by to see them!—Naming whom

Thou art not unremembered.

*Hermes.* Dost thou charge  
 Me also with the blame of thy mischance?

*Prometheus.* I tell thee I loathe the  
 universal gods,  
 Who for the good I gave them rendered back

The ill of their injustice.

*Hermes.* Thou art mad—  
 Thou art raving, Titan, at the fever-height.

*Prometheus.* If it be madness to abhor  
 my foes

May I be mad!

*Hermes.* If thou wert prosperous,  
 Thou wouldst be unendurable.

*Prometheus.* Alas!

*Hermes.* Zeus knows not that word.

*Prometheus.* But maturing Time  
 Teaches all things.

*Hermes.* Howbeit, thou hast  
 not learnt

The wisdom yet thou needest.

*Prometheus.* If I had,  
 I should not talk thus with a slave like thee.

*Hermes.* No answer thou vouchsafest,  
 I believe,

To the great Sire's requirement.

*Prometheus.* Verily  
 I owe him grateful service,—and should pay it.

*Hermes.* Why, thou dost mock me,  
 Titan, as I stood

A child before thy face.

*Prometheus.* No child, forsooth,  
 But yet more foolish than a foolish child,  
 If thou expect that I should answer aught  
 Thy Zeus can ask. No torture from his hand

Nor any machination in the world  
 Shall force mine utterance, ere he loose, himself,

These cankerous fetters from me! For the rest,

Let him now hurl his blanching lightnings down,

And with his white-winged snows and mutterings deep

Of subterranean thunders, mix all things,  
 Confound them in disorder. None of this

Shall bend my sturdy will, and make me speak

The name of his dethroner who shall come.

*Hermes.* Can this avail thee? Look to it!

*Prometheus.* Long ago  
 It was looked forward to—precounselled of.

*Hermes.* Vain god, take righteous  
 courage!—dare for once

To apprehend and front thine agonies  
 With a just prudence.

*Prometheus.* Vainly dost thou chafe  
 My soul with exhortation, as yonder sea

Goes beating on the rock. Oh! think  
no more

That I, fear-struck by Zeus to a woman's  
mind,

Will supplicate him, loathed as he is,  
With feminine upliftings of my hands,  
To break these chains. Far from me be  
the thought!

*Hermes.* I have indeed, methinks, said  
much in vain,—

For still thy heart, beneath my showers  
of prayers,

Lies dry and hard,—nay, leaps like  
a young horse

Who bites against the new bit in his teeth,  
And tugs and struggles against the new-  
tried rein,—

Still fiercest in the feeblest thing of all,  
Which sophism is,—since absolute will  
disjoined

From perfect mind is worse than weak.  
Behold,

Unless my words persuade thee, what  
a blast

And whirlwind of inevitable woe  
Must sweep persuasion through thee!

For at first

The Father will split up this jut of rock  
With the great thunder and the bolted  
flame,

And hide thy body where a hinge of stone  
Shall catch it like an arm;—and when  
thou hast passed

A long black time within, thou shalt  
come out

To front the sun while Zeus's winged  
hound,

The strong carnivorous eagle, shall  
wheel down

To meet thee, self-called to a daily feast,  
And set his fierce beak in thee, and tear off  
The long rags of thy flesh, and batten deep

Upon thy dusky liver. Do not look  
For any end moreover to this curse,

Or ere some god appear, to accept thy  
pangs

On his own head vicarious, and descend  
With unreluctant step the darks of hell

And gloomy abysses around Tartarus.  
Then ponder this!—this threat is not a

growth

Of vain invention; it is spoken and meant!  
King Zeus's mouth is impotent to lie,

Consummating the utterance by the act—  
So, look to it, thou!—take heed,—and  
nevermore

Forget good counsel, to indulge self-will.

*Chorus.* Our Hermes suits his reasons  
to the times;

At least I think so,—since he bids thee  
drop

Self-will for prudent counsel. Yield to  
him!

When the wise err, their wisdom makes  
their shame.

*Prometheus.* Unto me the foreknower,  
this mandate of power

He cries, to reveal it.  
What's strange in my fate, if I suffer  
from hate

At the hour that I feel it?  
Let the locks of the lightning, all bristling  
and whitening,

Flash, coiling me round,  
While the ether goes surging 'neath  
thunder and scourging

Of wild winds unbound!

Let the blast of the firmament whirl  
from its place

The earth rooted below,  
And the brine of the ocean, in rapid  
emotion,

Be it driven in the face  
Of the stars up in heaven, as they walk  
to and fro!

Let him hurl me anon, into Tartarus—  
on—

To the blackest degree,  
With Necessity's vortices strangling me  
down;

But he cannot join death to a fate meant  
for me!

*Hermes.* Why the words that he speaks  
and the thoughts that he thinks

Are maniacal!—add,  
If the Fate who hath bound him, should  
loose not the links,

He were utterly mad.  
Then depart ye who groan with him,  
Leaving to moan with him,—

Go in haste! lest the roar of the thunder  
anearning

Should blast you to idiocy, living and  
hearing.

*Chorus.* Change thy speech for an-  
other, thy thought for a new,

If to move me and teach me indeed  
 be thy care!  
 For thy words swerve so far from the  
 loyal and true  
 That the thunder of Zeus seems more  
 easy to bear.  
 How! couldst teach me to venture such  
 vileness? behold!  
 I *choose*, with this victim, this anguish  
 foretold!  
 I recoil from the traitor in hate and  
 disdain,—  
 And I know that the curse of the  
 treason is worse  
 Than the pang of the chain.  
*Hermes*. Then remember, O nymphs,  
 what I tell you before,  
 Nor, when pierced by the arrows that  
 Até will throw you,  
 Cast blame on your fate, and declare  
 evermore  
 That Zeus thrust you on anguish he  
 did not foreshow you.  
 Nay, verily, nay! for ye perish anon  
 For your deed—by your choice!—by  
 no blindness of doubt,  
 No abruptness of doom!—but by mad-  
 ness alone.

In the great net of Até, whence none  
 cometh out,  
 Ye are wound and undone!  
*Prometheus*. Aye! in act, now—in  
 word, now, no more,  
 Earth is rocking in space!  
 And the thunders crash up with a roar  
 upon roar,  
 And the eddying lightnings flash fire  
 in my face,  
 And the whirlwinds are whirling the  
 dust round and round,  
 And the blasts of the winds universal,  
 leap free  
 And blow each upon each with a passion  
 of sound,  
 And ether goes mingling in storm  
 with the sea!  
 Such a curse on my head, in a manifest  
 dread,  
 From the hand of your Zeus has been  
 hurtled along.  
 O my mother's fair glory! O Aether,  
 enringing  
 All eyes with the sweet common light  
 of thy bringing,  
 Dost see how I suffer this wrong?

## A LAMENT FOR ADONIS

FROM THE GREEK OF BION

I  
 I MOURN for Adonis—Adonis is dead,  
 Fair Adonis is dead, and the Loves  
 are lamenting.  
 Sleep, Cypris, no more on thy purple-  
 strewed bed!  
 Arise, wretch stoled in black,—beat  
 thy breast unrelenting,  
 And shriek to the worlds, 'Fair Adonis  
 is dead.'

II  
 I mourn for Adonis—the Loves are  
 lamenting.  
 He lies on the hills in his beauty and  
 death,—

The white tusk of a boar has trans-  
 pierced his white thigh.  
 Cytherea grows mad at his thin  
 gasping breath,  
 While the black blood drips down on  
 the pale ivory,  
 And his eye-balls lie quenched with  
 the weight of his brows,  
 The rose fades from his lips, and upon  
 them just parted  
 The kiss dies the goddess consents  
 not to lose,  
 Though the kiss of the Dead cannot  
 make her glad-hearted:  
 He knows not who kisses him dead  
 in the dew.

## III

I mourn for Adonis—the Loves are lamenting.  
 Deep, deep in the thigh, is Adonis's wound,  
 But a deeper, is Cypris's bosom presenting.  
 The youth lieth dead while his dogs howl around,  
 And the nymphs weep aloud from the mists of the hill,  
 And the poor Aphrodité, with tresses unbound,  
 All dishevelled, unsandalled, shrieks mournful and shrill  
 Through the dusk of the groves. The thorns, tearing her feet,  
 Gather up the red flower of her blood which is holy,  
 Each footstep she takes,—and the valleys repeat  
 The sharp cry she utters, and draw it out slowly.  
 She calls on her spouse, her Assyrian, on him  
 Her own youth, while the dark blood spreads over his body,  
 The chest taking hue from the gash in the limb,  
 And the bosom once ivory, turning to ruddy.

## IV

Ah, ah, Cytherea! the Loves are lamenting.  
 She lost her fair spouse, and so lost her fair smile—  
 When he lived she was fair by the whole world's consenting,  
 Whose fairness is dead with him! woe worth the while!  
 All the mountains above and the oak-lands below  
 Murmur, ah, ah Adonis! the streams overflow  
 Aphrodité's deep wail,—river-fountains in pity  
 Weep soft in the hills, and the flowers as they blow  
 Redden outward with sorrow, while all hear her go  
 With the song of her sadness through mountain and city.

## V

Ah, ah, Cytherea! Adonis is dead,  
 Fair Adonis is dead—Echo answers, Adonis!  
 Who weeps not for Cypris, when bowing her head  
 She stares at the wound where it gapes and astonies?  
 —When, ah, ah!—she saw how the blood ran away  
 And empurpled the thigh, and, with wild hands flung out,  
 Said with sobs, 'Stay, Adonis! unhappy one, stay,  
 Let me feel thee once more—let me ring thee about  
 With the clasp of my arms, and press kiss into kiss!  
 Wait a little, Adonis, and kiss me again,  
 For the last time, beloved,—and but so much of this  
 That the kiss may learn life from the warmth of the strain!  
 —Till thy breath shall exude from thy soul to my mouth,  
 To my heart,—and the love-charm I, once more-receiving,  
 May drink thy love in it, and keep of a truth  
 That one kiss in the place of Adonis the living.  
 Thou fliest me, mournful one, fliest me far,  
 My Adonis, and seekest the Acheron portal,—  
 To Hell's cruel King goest down with a scar,  
 While I weep and live on like a wretched immortal,  
 And follow no step!—O Persephoné, take him,  
 My husband!—thou'rt better and brighter than I,  
 So all beauty flows down to thee! I cannot make him  
 Look up at my grief,—there's despair in my cry,  
 Since I wail for Adonis who died to me . . . died to me . . .  
 —Then, I fear *thee*!—Art thou dead, my Adored?  
 Passion ends like a dream in the sleep that's denied to me,—

Cypris is widowed,—the Loves seek  
their lord  
All the house through in vain! Charm  
of cestus has ceased  
With thy clasp!—oh, too bold in the  
hunt past preventing,  
Aye, mad, thou so fair . . . to have strife  
with a beast!—  
Thus the goddess wailed on—and the  
Loves are lamenting.

## VI

Ah, ah, Cytherea! Adonis is dead.  
She wept tear after tear, with the  
blood which was shed,—  
And both turned into flowers for the  
earth's garden-close,  
Her tears, to the wind flower,—his  
blood, to the rose.

## VII

I mourn for Adonis—Adonis is dead.  
Weep no more in the woods, Cytherea,  
thy lover!  
So, well! make a place for his corse in  
thy bed,  
With the purples thou sleepest in,  
under and over.  
He's fair, though a corse—a fair corse . . .  
like a sleeper.  
Lay him soft in the silks he had  
pleasure to fold,  
When, beside thee at night, holy  
dreams deep and deeper  
Enclosed his young life on the couch  
made of gold.  
Love him still, poor Adonis! cast on  
him together  
The crowns and the flowers! since he  
died from the place,  
Why let all die with him—let the  
blossoms go wither,  
Rain myrtles and olive-buds down on  
his face!  
Rain the myrrh down, let all that is  
best fall a-pining,  
Since the myrrh of his life from thy  
keeping is swept!—

—Pale he lay, thine Adonis, in purples  
reclining,—  
The Loves raised their voices around  
him and wept.  
They have shorn their bright curls off  
to cast on Adonis;  
One treads on his bow,—on his arrows,  
another,—  
One breaks up a well-feathered quiver,  
and one is  
Bent low at a sandal, untying the  
strings,  
And one carries the vases of gold  
from the springs,  
While one washes the wound,—and  
behind them a brother  
Fans down on the body sweet air  
with his wings.

## VIII

Cytherea herself, now, the Loves are  
lamenting.  
Each torch at the door Hymenaeus  
blew out;  
And, the marriage-wreath dropping its  
leaves as repenting,  
No more 'Hymen, Hymen,' is  
chanted about,  
But the *ai ai* instead—'ai alas' is  
begun  
For Adonis, and then follows 'ai  
Hymenaeus!'  
The Graces are weeping for Cinyris'  
son,  
Sobbing low, each to each, 'His fair  
eyes cannot see us!'  
Their wail strikes more shrill than the  
sadder Dione's.  
The Fates mourn aloud for Adonis,  
Adonis,  
Deep chanting; he hears not a word  
that they say.  
He *would* hear, but Persephoné has  
him in keeping.  
—Cease moan, Cytherea—leave pomps  
for to-day,  
And weep new when a new year  
refits thee for weeping.

## A VISION OF POETS

O Sacred Essence, lighting me this hour,  
How may I lightly stile thy great power?  
*Echo.* Power! but of whence? under the greenwood sprays?  
Or liv'st in Heaven? saye.  
*Echo.* In Heavens aye.  
In Heavens aye! tell, may I it obtayne  
By alms, by fasting, prayer,—by paine?  
*Echo.* By paine.  
Show me the paine, it shall be undergone:  
I to mine end will still go on.  
*Echo.* Go on.

*Britannia's Pastorals.*

A POET could not sleep aright,  
For his soul kept up too much light  
Under his eyelids for the night.

And thus he rose disquieted  
With sweet rimes ringing through his  
head,  
And in the forest wandered,

Where, sloping up the darkest glades,  
The moon had drawn long colonnades,  
Upon whose floor the verdure fades

To a faint silver,—pavement fair  
The antique wood-nymphs scarce would  
dare

To footprint o'er, had such been there,

And rather sit by breathlessly,  
With fear in their large eyes, to see  
The consecrated sight. But he

The poet, who with spirit-kiss  
Familiar, had long claimed for his  
Whatever earthly beauty is,—

Who also in his spirit bore  
A Beauty passing the earth's store,  
Walked calmly onward evermore.

His aimless thoughts in metre went,  
Like a babe's hand without intent  
Drawn down a seven-stringed instru-  
ment.

Nor jarred it with his humour as,  
With a faint stirring of the grass,  
An apparition fair did pass.

He might have feared another time,  
But all things fair and strange did chime  
With his thoughts then, as rime to  
rime.

An angel had not startled him,  
Alighted from Heaven's burning rim  
To breathe from glory in the Dim;

Much less a lady riding slow  
Upon a palfrey white as snow,  
And smooth as a snow-cloud could go.

Full upon his she turned her face,—  
'What, ho, sir poet! dost thou pace  
Our woods at night, in ghostly chace

'Of some fair Dryad of old tales,  
Who chaunts between the nightingales,  
And over sleep by song prevails?'

She smiled; but he could see arise  
Her soul from far adown her eyes,  
Prepared as if for sacrifice.

She looked a queen who seemeth gay  
From royal grace alone. 'Now, nay,'  
He answered,—'slumber passed away

'Compelled by instincts in my head  
That I should see to-night, instead  
Of a fair nymph, some fairer Dread.'

She looked up quickly to the sky  
And spake:—'The moon's regality  
Will hear no praise! she is as I.

'She is in heaven, and I on earth;  
This is my kingdom—I come forth  
To crown all poets to their worth.'

He brake in with a voice that mourned :  
 'To their worth, lady? They are scorned  
 By men they sing for, till inurned.

'To their worth? Beauty in the mind  
 Leaves the hearth cold,—and love-refined  
 Ambitions make the world unkind,

'The boor who ploughs the daisy down,  
 The chief whose mortgage of renown  
 Fixed upon graves, has bought a crown—

'Both these are happier, more approved  
 Than poets!—why should I be moved  
 In saying . . . both are more beloved?'

'The south can judge not of the north,'  
 She resumed calmly; 'I come forth  
 To crown all poets to their worth.

'Yea, verily, to anoint them all  
 With blessed oils which surely shall  
 Smell sweeter as the ages fall.'

'As sweet,' the poet said, and rung  
 A low sad laugh, 'as flowers are, sprung  
 Out of their graves when they die young.

'As sweet as window eglantine,  
 Some bough of which, as they decline,  
 The hired nurse gathers at their sign.

'As sweet, in short, as perfumed shroud  
 Which the gay Roman maidens sewed  
 For English Keats, singing aloud.'

The lady answered, 'Yea, as sweet!  
 The things thou namest, being complete  
 In fragrance as I measure it.

'Since sweet the death-clothes and the  
 knell  
 Of him who having lived, dies well,—  
 And holy sweet the asphodel

'Stirred softly by that foot of his,  
 When he treads brave on all that is,  
 Into the world of souls, from this.

'Since sweet the tears, dropped at the  
 door  
 Of tearless Death,—and even before,  
 Sweet, consecrated evermore.

'What, dost thou judge it a strange thing,  
 That poets, crowned for vanquishing,  
 Should bear some dust from out the ring?

'Come on with me, come on with me,  
 And learn in coming! let me free  
 Thy spirit into verity.'

She ceased: her palfrey's paces sent  
 No separate noises as she went;  
 'Twas a bee's hum, a little spent.

And while the poet seemed to tread  
 Along the drowsy noise so made,  
 The forest heaved up overhead

Its billowy foliage through the air,  
 And the calm stars did far and spare  
 O'erswim the masses everywhere;

Save when the overtopping pines  
 Did bar their tremulous light with lines  
 All fixed and black. Now the moon shines

A broader glory. You may see  
 The trees grow rarer presently:  
 The air blows up more fresh and free.

Until they come from dark to light,  
 And from the forest to the sight  
 Of the large Heaven-heart, bare with  
 night,—

A fiery throb in every star,  
 Those burning arteries that are  
 The conduits of God's life afar!

A wild brown moorland underneath,  
 And four pools breaking up the heath  
 With white low gleamings, blank as  
 death.

Beside the first pool, near the wood,  
 A dead tree in set horror stood,  
 Peeled and disjointed, stark as rood,

Since thunder-stricken, years ago,  
 Fixed in the spectral strain and throe  
 Wherewith it struggled from the blow:

A monumental tree, alone,  
 That will not bend in storms, nor groan,  
 But break off sudden like a stone.

Its lifeless shadow lies oblique  
 Upon the pool,—where, javelin-like,  
 The star-rays quiver while they strike.

'Drink,' said the lady, very still—  
 'Be holy and cold.' He did her will,  
 And drank the starry water chill.

The next pool they came near unto  
Was bare of trees : there, only grew  
Straight flags and lilies, just a few,

Which sullen on the water sate  
And leant their faces on the flat,  
As weary of the starlight-state.

'Drink,' said the lady, grave and slow,  
'*World's use* behoveth thee to know.'  
He drank the bitter wave below.

The third pool, girt with thorny bushes,  
And flaunting weeds, and reeds and  
rushes  
That winds sang through in mournful  
gushes,

Was whitely smeared in many a round  
By a slow slime : the starlight swound  
Over the ghastly light it found.

'Drink,' said the lady, sad and slow,  
'*World's love* behoveth thee to know.'  
He looked to her, commanding so.

Her brow was troubled, but her eye  
Struck clear to his soul. For all reply  
He drank the water suddenly,—

Then, with a deathly sickness, passed  
Beside the fourth pool and the last,  
Where weights of shadow were down-  
cast

From yew and alder, and rank trails  
Of nightshade clasping the trunk-scales,  
And flung across the intervals

From yew to yew. Who dares to stoop  
Where those dank branches overdroop,  
Into his heart the chill strikes up ;

He hears a silent gliding coil,  
The snakes strain hard against the soil,  
His foot slips in their slimy oil,

And toads seem crawling on his hand,  
And clinging bats, but dimly scanned,  
Full in his face their wings expand.

A paleness took the poet's cheek :  
'Must I drink *here*?' he seemed to seek  
The lady's will with utterance meek.

'Aye, aye,' she said, 'it so must be'  
(And this time she spake cheerfully)  
'Behoves thee know *World's cruelty*.'

He bowed his forehead till his mouth  
Curved in the wave, and drank unloath,  
As if from rivers of the south.

His lips sobbed through the water rank,  
His heart paused in him while he drank,  
His brain beat heart-like, rose and sank,  
And he swooned backward to a dream,  
Wherein he lay 'twixt gloom and gleam,  
With Death and Life at each extreme.

And spiritual thunders, born of soul  
Not cloud, did leap from mystic pole  
And o'er him roll and counter-roll,

Crushing their echoes reboant  
With their own wheels. Did Heaven  
so grant  
His spirit a sign of covenant ?

At last came silence. A slow kiss  
Did crown his forehead after this :  
His eyelids flew back for the bliss.

The lady stood beside his head,  
Smiling a thought, with hair dispread.  
The moonshine seemed dishevelled

In her sleek tresses manifold,  
Like Danae's in the rain of old,  
That dripped with melancholy gold.

But *she* was holy, pale, and high,  
As one who saw an ecstasy  
Beyond a foretold agony.

'Rise up!' said she, with voice where  
song

Eddied through speech—'rise up! be  
strong!

And learn how right avenges wrong.'

The poet rose up on his feet :  
He stood before an altar set  
For sacrament, with vessels meet ;

And mystic altar-lights which shine  
As if their flames were crystalline  
Carved flames, that would not shrink or  
pine.

The altar filled the central place  
Of a great church, and toward its face  
Long aisles did shoot and interlace,

And from it a continuous mist  
Of incense (round the edges kissed  
By a yellow light of amethyst)

Wound upward slowly and throbbingly,  
Cloud within cloud, right silverly,  
Cloud above cloud, victoriously,—

Broke full against the archèd roof,  
And, thence refracting, eddied off,  
And floated through the marble woof

Of many a fine-wrought architrave,  
Then, poising its white masses brave,  
Swept solemnly down aisle and nave ;

Where now in dark, and now in light,  
The countless columns, glimmering  
white,  
Seemed leading out to the Infinite.

Plunged half-way up the shaft they  
showed,  
In that pale shifting incense-cloud,  
Which flowed them by, and overflowed,

Till mist and marble seemed to blend,  
And the whole temple, at the end,  
With its own incense to distend,—

The arches, like a giant's bow,  
To bend and slacken,—and below,  
The nichèd saints to come and go.

Alone, amid the shifting scene,  
That central altar stood serene  
In its clear steadfast taper-sheen.

Then first, the poet was aware  
Of a chief angel standing there  
Before that altar, in the glare.

His eyes were dreadful, for you saw  
That *they* saw God—his lips and jaw,  
Grand-made and strong, as Sinai's Law

They could enunciate and refrain  
From vibratory after-pain,  
And his brow's height was sovereign.

On the vast background of his wings  
Rises his image, and he flings,  
From each plumed arc, pale glitterings

And fiery flakes (as beateth more  
Or less, the angel-heart) before  
And round him, upon roof and floor,

Edging with fire the shifting fumes ;  
While at his side, 'twixt lights and  
glooms,  
The phantasm of an organ booms.

Extending from which instrument  
And angel, right and left-way bent.  
The poet's sight grew sentient

Of a strange company around  
And toward the altar,—pale and bound  
With bay above the eyes profound.

Deathful their faces were, and yet  
The power of life was in them set—  
Never forgot, nor to forget.

Sublime significance of mouth,  
Dilated nostril full of youth,  
And forehead royal with the truth.

These faces were not multiplied  
Beyond your count, but side by side  
Did front the altar, glorified.

Still as a vision, yet exprest  
Full as an action—look and geste  
Of buried saint in risen rest.

The poet knew them. Faint and dim  
His spirits seemed to sink in him,  
Then, like a dolphin, change and swim

The current. These were poets true,  
Who died for Beauty, as martyrs do  
For Truth—the ends being scarcely two.

God's prophets of the Beautiful  
These poets were ; of iron rule,  
The rugged cilix, serge of wool.

Here, Homer, with the broad suspense  
Of thunderous brows, and lips intense  
Of garrulous god-innocence.

There, Shakespeare, on whose forehead  
climb  
The crowns o' the world. Oh, eyes  
sublime,  
With tears and laughter for all time !

Here, Aeschylus, the women swooned  
To see so awful, when he trown'd  
As the gods did !—he standeth crowned.

Euripides, with close and mild  
Scholastic lips,—that could be wild,  
And laugh or sob out like a child

Even in the classes. Sophocles,  
With that king's look which, down the  
trees,  
Followed the dark effigies

Of the lost Theban. Hesiod old,  
Who, somewhat blind and deaf and cold,  
Cared most for gods and bulls. And bold

Electric Pindar, quick as fear,  
With race-dust on his cheeks, and clear  
Slant startled eyes that seem to hear

The chariot rounding the last goal,  
To hurtle past it in his soul.  
And Sappho, with that gloriolè

Of ebon hair on calmèd brows.  
O poet-woman! none forgoes  
The leap, attaining the repose!

Theocritus, with glittering locks  
Dropt sideways, as betwixt the rocks  
He watched the visionary flocks.

And Aristophanes, who took  
The world with mirth, and laughter-  
struck

The hollow caves of Thought and woke  
The infinite echoes hid in each.

And Virgil : shade of Mantuan beech  
Did help the shade of bay to reach

And knit around his forehead high :  
For his gods wore less majesty  
Than his brown bees hummed death-  
lessly.

Lucretius—nobler than his mood ;  
Who dropped his plummet down the  
broad

Deep universe, and said ' No God,'

Finding no bottom : he denied  
Divinely the divine, and died  
Chief poet on the Tiber-side

By grace of God ! his face is stern,  
As one compelled, in spite of scorn,  
To teach a truth he would not learn.

And Ossian, dimly seen or guessed :  
Once counted greater than the rest,  
When mountain-winds blew out his vest.

And Spenser drooped his dreaming head  
(With languid sleep-smile you had said  
From his own verse engenderèd)

On Ariosto's, till they ran  
Their curls in one.—The Italian  
Shot nimbler heat of bolder man

From his fine lids. And Dante stern  
And sweet, whose spirit was an urn  
For wine and milk poured out in turn.

Hard-souled Alfieri ; and fancy-willed  
Boiardo,—who with laughter filled  
The pauses of the jostled shield.

And Berni, with a hand stretched out  
To sleek that storm. And, not without  
The wreath he died in, and the doubt

He died by, Tasso ! bard and lover,  
Whose visions were too thin to cover  
The face of a false woman over.

And soft Racine,—and grave Corneille,  
The orator of rimes, whose wail  
Scarce shook his purple. And Petrarch  
pale,

From whose brainlighted heart were  
thrown

A thousand thoughts beneath the sun,  
Each lucid with the name of One.

And Camoens, with that look he had,  
Compelling India's Genius sad  
From the wave through the Lusiad,—

The murmurs of the storm-cape ocean  
Indrawn in vibrative emotion  
Along the verse. And, while devotion

In his wild eyes fantastic shone  
Under the tonsure blown upon  
By airs celestial,—Calderon.

And bold De Vega,—who breathed quick  
Verse after verse, till death's old trick  
Put pause to life and rhetoric.

And Goethe—with that reaching eye  
His soul reached out from, far and high,  
And fell from inner entity.

And Schiller, with heroic front,  
Worthy of Plutarch's kiss upon 't,  
Too large for wreath of modern wont.

And Chaucer, with his infantine  
Familiar clasp of things divine :  
That mark upon his lip is wine.

Here, Milton's eyes strike piercing-dim :  
The shapes of suns and stars did swim  
Like clouds from them, and granted him

God for sole vision. Cowley, there;  
Whose active fancy debonair  
Drew straws like amber—foul to fair.

Drayton and Browne,—with smiles they  
drew  
From outward nature, still kept new  
From their own inward nature true.

And Marlowe, Webster, Fletcher, Ben—  
Whose fire-hearts sowed our furrows  
when

The world was worthy of such men.

And Burns, with pungent passionings  
Set in his eyes. Deep lyric springs  
Are of the fire-mount's issuings.

And Shelley, in his white ideal,  
All statue-blind! And Keats the real  
Adonis, with the hymeneal

Fresh vernal buds half sunk between  
His youthful curls, kissed straight and  
sheen

In his Rome-grave, by Venus queen.

And poor, proud Byron,—sad as grave,  
And salt as life: forlornly brave,  
And quivering with the dart he drave.

And visionary Coleridge, who  
Did sweep his thoughts as angels do  
Their wings, with cadence up the Blue.

These poets faced, and many more,  
The lighted altar looming o'er  
The clouds of incense dim and hoar:

And all their faces, in the lull  
Of natural things, looked wonderful  
With life and death and deathless rule.

All, still as stone, and yet intense;  
As if by spirit's vehemence  
That stone were carved, and not by sense.

But where the heart of each should beat,  
There seemed a wound instead of it,  
From whence the blood dropped to their  
feet,

Drop after drop—dropped heavily,  
As century follows century  
Into the deep eternity.

Then said the lady—and her word  
Came distant, as wide waves were stirred  
Between her and the ear that heard,

'*World's use* is cold, *world's love* is vain,  
*World's cruelty* is bitter bane,  
But pain is not the fruit of pain.

'Hearken, O poet, whom I led  
From the dark wood. Dismissing dread,  
Now hear this angel in my stead.

'His organ's clavier strikes along  
These poets' hearts, sonorous, strong,  
They gave him without count of wrong,—

'A diapason whence to guide  
Up to God's feet, from these who died,  
An anthem fully glorified.

'Whereat God's blessing . . . IBARAK  
(יְבָרַךְ)

Breathes back this music—folds it back  
About the earth in vapoury rack,

'And men walk in it, crying "Lo,  
The world is wider, and we know  
The very heavens look brighter so.

"The stars move statelier round the edge  
Of the silver spheres, and give in pledge  
Their light for nobler privilege.

"No little flower but joys or grieves,  
Full life is rustling in the sheaves,  
Full spirit sweeps the forest-leaves."

'So works this music on the earth,  
God so admits it, sends it forth,  
To add another worth to worth—

'A new creation-bloom that rounds  
The old creation, and expounds  
His Beautiful in tuneful sounds.

'Now hearken!' Then the poet gazed  
Upon the angel glorious-faced,  
Whose hand, majestically raised,

Floated across the organ-keys,  
Like a pale moon o'er murmuring seas,  
With no touch but with influences.

Then rose and fell (with swell and wound  
Of shapeless noises wandering round  
A concord which at last they found)

Those mystic keys—the tones were  
mixed,  
Dim, faint, and thrilled and throbbed  
betwixt

The incomplete and the unfixed:

And therein mighty minds were heard  
In mighty musings, inly stirred,  
And struggling outward for a word.

Until these surges, having run  
This way and that, gave out as one  
An Aphroditè of sweet tune,—

A Harmony, that, finding vent,  
Upward in grand ascension went,  
Winged to a heavenly argument—

Up, upward! like a saint who strips  
The shroud back from his eyes and lips,  
And rises in apocalypse.

A harmony sublime and plain,  
Which cleft (as flying swan, the rain,—  
Throwing the drops off with a strain

Of her white wing) those undertones  
Of perplexed chords, and soared at once  
And struck out from the starry thrones

Their several silver octaves as  
It passed to God. The music was  
Of divine stature—strong to pass.

And those who heard it, understood  
Something of life in spirit and blood—  
Something of nature's fair and good.

And while it sounded, those great souls  
Did thrill as racers at the goals,  
And burn in all their aureoles.

But she, the lady, as vapour-bound,  
Stood calmly in the joy of sound,—  
Like Nature with the showers around.

And when it ceased, the blood which fell,  
Again, alone grew audible,  
Tolling the silence as a bell.

The sovran angel lifted high  
His hand, and spake out sovranly :  
'Tried poets, hearken and reply!

'Give me true answers. If we grant  
That not to suffer, is to want  
The conscience of the jubilant,—

'If ignorance of anguish is  
*But* ignorance,—and mortals miss  
Far prospects, by a level bliss,—

'If, as two colours must be viewed  
In a visible image, mortals should  
Need good and evil, to see good,—

'If to speak nobly, comprehends  
To feel profoundly—if the ends  
Of power and suffering, Nature blends,—

'If poets on the tripod must  
Writhe like the Pythian, to make just  
Their oracles, and merit trust,—

'If every vatic word that sweeps  
To change the world, must pale their lips,  
And leave their own souls in eclipse,—

'If to search deep the universe  
Must pierce the searcher with the curse,—  
Because that bolt (in man's reverse)

'Was shot to the heart o' the wood, and  
lies  
Wedged deepest in the best,—if eyes  
That look for visions and surprise

'From influent angels, must shut down  
Their lids first, upon sun and moon,  
The head asleep upon a stone,—

'If ONE who did redeem you back,  
By His own loss, from final wrack,  
Did consecrate by touch and track

'Those temporal sorrows, till the taste  
Of brackish waters of the waste  
Is salt with tears He dropt too fast,—

'If all the crowns of earth must wound  
With prickings of the thorns He found,—  
If saddest sighs swell sweetest sound,—

'What say ye unto this?—refuse  
This baptism in salt water?—choose  
Calm breasts, mute lips, an dlabour loose?

'Or, oh ye gifted givers! ye  
Who give your liberal hearts to me,  
To make the world this harmony,

'Are ye resigned that they be spent  
To such world's help?'—

The Spirits bent  
Their awful brows and said—'Content.'

Content! it sounded like *amen*,  
Said by a choir of mourning men ;  
An affirmation full of pain

And patience,—aye, of glorying  
And adoration,—as a king  
Might seal an oath for governing.

Then said the angel—and his face  
Lightened abroad, until the place  
Grew larger for a moment's space,—

The long aisles flashing out in light,  
And nave and transept, columns white  
And arches crossed, being clear to sight

As if the roof were off, and all  
Stood in the noon-sun,—‘Lo! I call  
To other hearts as liberal.

‘This pedal strikes out in the air:  
My instrument has room to bear  
Still fuller strains and perfecter.

‘Herein is room, and shall be room  
While Time lasts, for new hearts to come  
Consummating while they consume.

‘What living man will bring a gift  
Of his own heart, and help to lift  
The tune?—The race is to the swift.’

So asked the angel. Straight the while,  
A company came up the aisle  
With measured step and sorted smile;

Cleaving the incense-clouds that rise,  
With winking unaccustomed eyes,  
And love-locks smelling sweet of spice.

One bore his head above the rest,  
As if the world were dispossessed;  
And One did pillow chin on breast,

Right languid—an as he should faint.  
One shook his curls across his paint,  
And moralized on worldly taint.

One, slanting up his face, did wink  
The salt rheum to the eyelid's brink,  
To think—O gods! or—not to think!

Some trod out stealthily and slow,  
As if the sun would fall in snow  
If they walked to instead of fro.

And some, with conscious ambling free,  
Did shake their bells right daintily  
On hand and foot, for harmony.

And some, composing sudden sighs  
In attitudes of point-device,  
Rehearsed impromptu agonies.

And when this company drew near  
The spirits crowned, it might appear,  
Submitted to a ghastly fear.

As a sane eye in master-passion  
Constrains a maniac to the fashion  
Of hideous maniac imitation

In the least geste—the dropping low  
O' the lid, the wrinkling of the brow,  
Exaggerate with mock and mow,—

So mastered was that company  
By the crowned vision utterly,  
Swayed to a maniac mockery.

One dulled his eyeballs, as they ached  
With Homer's forehead, though he lacked  
An inch of any. And one racked

His lower lip with restless tooth,  
As Pindar's rushing words forsooth  
Were pent behind it. One, his smooth

Pink cheeks, did rumple passionate,  
Like Aeschylus—and tried to prate  
On trolling tongue, of fate and fate.

One set her eyes like Sappho's—or  
Any light woman's! one forbore  
Like Dante, or any man as poor

In mirth, to let a smile undo  
His hard-shut lips. And one that drew  
Sour humours from his mother, blew

His sunken cheeks out to the size  
Of most unnatural jollities,  
Because Anacreon looked jest-wise.

So with the rest.—It was a sight  
A great world-laughter would requite,  
Or great world-wrath, with equal right.

Out came a speaker from that crowd  
To speak for all—in sleek and proud  
Exordial periods, while he bowed

His knee before the angel.—‘Thus,  
O angel who hast called for us,  
We bring thee service emulous,—

Fit service from sufficient soul,  
Hand-service, to receive world's dole,  
Lip-service, in world's ear to roll

Adjusted concords—soft enow  
To hear the wine-cups passing, through,  
And not too grave to spoil the show.

‘Thou, certes, when thou askest more,  
O sapient angel, leanest o'er  
The window-sill of metaphor.

'To give our hearts up! fie!—that rage  
Barbaric antedates the age:  
It is not done on any stage.

'Because your scald or gleeman went  
With seven or nine-stringed instrument  
Upon his back—must ours be bent?

'We are not pilgrims, by your leave;  
No, nor yet martyrs! if we grieve,  
It is to rime to . . . summer eve.

'And if we labour, it shall be,  
As suiteth best with our degree,  
In after-dinner reverie.'

More yet that speaker would have said,  
Poising, between his smiles fair-fed,  
Each separate phrase till finished.

But all the foreheads of those born  
And dead true poets flashed with scorn  
Betwixt the bay leaves round them  
worn—

Aye, jettied such brave fire, that they,  
The new-come, shrank and paled away,  
Like leaden ashes when the day

Strikes on the hearth. A spirit-blast,  
A presence known by power, at last  
Took them up mutely—they had passed.

And *he*, our pilgrim-poet, saw  
Only their places, in deep awe,—  
What time the angel's smile did draw

His gazing upward. Smiling on,  
The angel in the angel shone,  
Revealing glory in benison.

Till, ripened in the light which shut  
The poet in, his spirit mute  
Dropped sudden, as a perfect fruit.

He fell before the angel's feet;  
Saying—'If what is true is sweet,  
In something I may compass it.

'For, where my worthiness is poor,  
My will stands richly at the door,  
To pay shortcomings evermore.

'Accept me therefore. Not for price,  
And not for pride, my sacrifice  
Is tendered! for my soul is nice

'And will beat down those dusty seeds  
Of bearded corn, if she succeeds  
In soaring while the covey feeds.

'I soar—I am drawn up like the lark  
To its white cloud. So high my mark,  
Albeit my wing is small and dark.

'I ask no wages—seek no fame.  
Sew me, for shroud round face and name,  
God's banner of the oriflamme.

'I only would have leave to loose  
(In tears and blood, if so He choose)  
Mine inward music out to use,

'I only would be spent—in pain  
And loss, perchance—but not in vain,  
Upon the sweetness of that strain!

'Only project, beyond the bound  
Of mine own life, so lost and found,  
My voice, and live on in its sound!

'Only embrace and be embraced  
By fiery ends,—whereby to waste,  
And light God's future with my past.'

The angel's smile grew more divine,  
The mortal speaking—aye, its shine  
Swelled fuller, like a choir-note fine,

Till the broad glory round his brow  
Did vibrate with the light below;  
But what he said, I do not know.

Nor know I if the man who prayed,  
Rose up accepted, unforbade,  
From the church-floor where he was  
laid,—

Nor if a listening life did run  
Through the king-poets, one by one  
Rejoicing in a worthy son.

My soul, which might have seen, grew  
blind

By what it looked on: I can find  
No certain count of things behind.

I saw alone, dim, white, and grand  
As in a dream, the angel's hand  
Stretched forth in gesture of command

Straight through the haze. And so, as  
erst,  
A strain more noble than the first  
Mused in the organ, and outburst.

With giant march, from floor to roof  
Rose the full notes,—now parted off  
In pauses massively aloof

Like measured thunders,—now rejoined  
In concords of mysterious kind  
Which fused together sense and mind,—

Now flashing sharp on sharp along  
Exultant, in a mounting throng,—  
Now dying off to a low song

Fed upon minors!—wavelike sounds  
Re-eddying into silver rounds,  
Enlarging liberty with bounds.

And every rhythm that seemed to close  
Survived in confluent underflows  
Symphonious with the next that rose.

Thus the whole strain being multiplied  
And greated,—with its glorified  
Wings shot abroad from side to side,—

Waved backward (as a wind might wave  
A Broken mist, and with as brave  
Wild roaring) arch and architrave,

Aisle, transept, column, marble wall,—  
Then swelling outward, prodigal  
Of aspiration beyond thrall,

Soared,—and drew up with it the whole  
Of this said vision—as a soul  
Is raised by a thought. And as a scroll

Of bright devices is unrolled  
Still upward, with a gradual gold,—  
So rose the vision manifold,

Angel and organ, and the round  
Of spirits, solemnized and crowned,—  
While the freed clouds of incense wound

Ascending, following in their track,  
And glimmering faintly, like the rack  
O' the moon in her own light cast back.

And as that solemn Dream withdrew,  
The lady's kiss did fall anew  
Cold on the poet's brow as dew.

And that same kiss which bound him  
first  
Beyond the senses, now reversed  
Its own law, and most subtly pierced

His spirit with the sense of things  
Sensual and present. Vanishings  
Of glory, with Aeolian wings

Struck him and passed: the lady's face  
Did melt back in the chrysopras  
Of the orient morning sky that was

Yet clear of lark,—and there and so  
She melted, as a star might do,  
Still smiling as she melted—slow.

Smiling so slow, he seemed to see  
Her smile the last thing, gloriously,  
Beyond her—far as memory.

Then he looked round: he was alone.  
He lay before the breaking sun,  
As Jacob at the Bethel stone.

And thought's entangled skein being  
wound,  
He knew the moorland of his sround,  
And the pale pools that smeared the  
ground;

The far wood-pines, like offing ships—  
The fourth pool's yew anear him drips,  
*World's cruelty* attaints his lips,

And still he tastes it—bitter still—  
Through all that glorious possible  
He had the sight of present ill.

Yet rising calmly up and slowly  
With such a cheer as scorneth folly,  
A mild delightsome melancholy,

He journeyed homeward through the  
wood,  
And prayed along the solitude,  
Betwixt the pines,—‘O God, my God!’

The golden morning's open flowings  
Did sway the trees to murmurous bow-  
ings,

In metric chant of blessed poems

And passing homeward through the  
wood,  
He prayed along the solitude,—  
‘Thou, Poet-God, art great and good!’

‘And though we must have, and have had  
Right reason to be earthly sad,—  
Thou, Poet-God, art great and glad!’

## CONCLUSION

Life treads on life, and heart on heart :  
We press too close in church and mart  
To keep a dream or grave apart.

And I was 'ware of walking down  
That same green forest where had gone  
The poet-pilgrim. One by one

I traced his footsteps. From the east  
A red and tender radiance pressed  
Through the near trees, until I guessed

The sun behind shone full and round ;  
While up the leafiness profound  
A wind scarce old enough for sound

Stood ready to blow on me when  
I turned that way ; and now and then  
The birds sang and brake off again

To shake their pretty feathers dry  
Of the dew sliding droppingly  
From the leaf-edges, and apply

Back to their song. 'Twixt dew and  
bird

So sweet a silence ministered,  
God seemed to use it for a word.

Yet morning souls did leap and run  
In all things, as the least had won  
A joyous insight of the sun.

And no one looking round the wood  
Could help confessing as he stood,  
*This Post-God is glad and good.*

But hark ! a distant sound that grows !  
A heaving, sinking of the boughs—  
A rustling murmur, not of those !

A breezy noise, which is not breeze !  
And white-clad children by degrees  
Steal out in troops among the trees,

Fair little children, morning-bright,  
With faces grave, yet soft to sight,  
Expressive of restrained delight.

Some plucked the palm-boughs within  
reach,  
And others leapt up high to catch  
The upper boughs, and shake from each

A rain of dew, till, wetted so,  
The child who held the branch let go,  
And it swang backward with a flow

Of faster drippings. Then I knew  
The children laughed—but the laugh flew  
From its own chirrup, as might do

A frightened song-bird ; and a child  
Who seemed the chief, said very mild,  
' Hush ! keep this morning undefiled.'

His eyes rebuked them from calm  
spheres ;  
His soul upon his brow appears  
In waiting for more holy years.

I called the child to me, and said,  
' What are your palms for ?'—' To be  
spread,'  
He answered, ' on a poet dead.

' The poet died last month, and now  
The world which had been somewhat  
slow  
In honouring his living brow, '

' Commands the palms—they must be  
strown  
On his new marble very soon,  
In a procession of the town.'

I sighed and said, ' Did he foresee  
Any such honour ?' ' Verily  
I cannot tell you,' answered he.

' But this I know,—I fain would lay  
Mine own head down, another day,  
As *he* did,—with the fame away.

' A lily, a friend's hand had plucked,  
Lay by his death-bed, which he looked  
As deep down as a bee had sucked,

' Then, turning to the lattice, gazed  
O'er hill and river, and upraised  
His eyes illumined and amazed

' With the world's beauty, up to God,  
Re-offering on their iris broad  
The images of things bestowed

' By the chief Poet.—" God ! " he cried,  
" Be praised for anguish, which has  
tried ;  
For beauty, which has satisfied :—

"For this world's presence, half within  
And half without me—thought and  
scene—

This sense of Being and Having been.

"I thank Thee that my soul hath room  
For Thy grand world. Both guests  
may come—

Beauty, to soul—Body, to tomb.

"I am content to be so weak :  
Put strength into the words I speak,  
And I am strong in what I seek.

"I am content to be so bare  
Before the archers, everywhere  
My wounds being stroked by heavenly  
air.

"I laid my soul before Thy feet,  
That Images of fair and sweet  
Should walk to other men on it.

"I am content to feel the step  
Of each pure Image!—let those keep  
To mandragore who care to sleep.

"I am content to touch the brink  
Of the other goblet, and I think  
My bitter drink a wholesome drink.

"Because my portion was assigned  
Wholesome and bitter—Thou art kind,  
And I am blessed to my mind.

"Gifted for giving, I receive  
The maythorn, and its scent outgive :  
I grieve not that I once did grieve.

"In my large joy of sight and touch  
Beyond what others count for such,  
I am content to suffer much.

"*I know*—is all the mourner saith,  
Knowledge by suffering entereth ;  
And Life is perfected by Death."

The child spake nobly. Strange to hear,  
His infantine soft accents clear  
Charged with high meanings, did appear ;

And fair to see, his form and face,  
Winged out with whiteness and pure  
grace  
From the green darkness of the place.

Behind his head a palm-tree grew :  
An orient beam which pierced it through  
Transversely on his forehead drew

The figure of a palm-branch brown  
Traced on its brightness up and down  
In fine fair lines,—a shadow-crown.

Guido might paint his angels so—  
A little angel, taught to go  
With holy words to saints below.

Such innocence of action yet  
Significance of object met  
In his whole bearing strong and sweet.

And all the children, the whole band,  
Did round in rosy reverence stand,  
Each with a palm-bough in his hand.

'And so he died,' I whispered.—'Nay,  
Not so,' the childish voice did say—  
'That poet turned him, first, to pray

'In silence, and God heard the rest  
'Twixt the sun's footsteps down the west.  
Then he called one who loved him best,

Yea, he called softly through the room  
(His voice was weak yet tender)—  
"Come,"

He said, "come nearer ! Let the bloom

"Of Life grow over, undenied,  
This bridge of Death, which is not wide—  
I shall be soon at the other side.

"Come, kiss me !" So the one in truth  
Who loved him best—in love, not ruth,  
Bowed down and kissed him mouth to  
mouth.

'And, in that kiss of Love, was won  
Life's manumission. All was done—  
The mouth that kissed last, kissed *alone*.

'But in the former, confluent kiss,  
The same was sealed, I think, by His,  
To words of truth and uprightness.'

The child's voice trembled—his lips shook  
Like a rose leaning o'er a brook,  
Which vibrates though it is not struck.

'And who,' I asked, a little moved  
Yet curious-eyed, 'was this that loved  
And kissed him last, as it behoved ?'

'*I*,' softly said the child ; and then,  
'*I*,' said he louder, once again ;  
'*His son*,—my rank is among men.

'And now that men exalt his name  
I come to gather palms with them,  
That holy Love may hallow Fame.

'He did not die alone, nor should  
His memory live so, 'mid these rude  
World-praisers—a worse solitude.

'Me, a voice calleth to that tomb  
Where these are strewing branch and  
bloom,  
Saying, *come nearer!*—and I come.

'Glory to God!' resumed he,  
And his eyes smiled for victory  
O'er their own tears which I could see

Fallen on the palm, down cheek and  
chin—

'That poet now has entered in  
The place of rest which is not sin.

'And while he rests, his songs in troops  
Walk up and down our earthly slopes,  
Companioned by diviner Hopes.'

'But *thou*,' I murmured,—to engage  
The child's speech farther—'hast an age  
Too tender for this orphanage.'

'Glory to God—to God!' he saith,  
'KNOWLEDGE BY SUFFERING ENTERETH,  
AND LIFE IS PERFECTED BY DEATH.'

## THE POET'S VOW

O be wiser thou,  
Instructed that true knowledge leads to love.—WORDSWORTH.

### PART THE FIRST

#### SHOWING WHEREFORE THE VOW WAS MADE

##### I

Eve is a twofold mystery;  
The stillness Earth doth keep,—  
The motion wherewith human hearts  
Do each to either leap,  
As if all souls between the poles,  
Felt 'Parting comes in sleep.'

##### II

The rowers lift their oars to view  
Each other in the sea;  
The landsmen watch the rocking boats  
In a pleasant company;  
While up the hill go gladlier still  
Dear friends by two and three.

##### III

The peasant's wife hath looked without  
Her cottage door and smiled,  
For there the peasant drops his spade  
To clasp his youngest child  
Which hath no speech, but its hands  
can reach  
And stroke his forehead mild.

##### IV

A poet sate that eventide  
Within his hall alone,  
As silent as its ancient lords  
In the confined place of stone,  
When the bat hath shrunk from the  
praying monk,  
And the praying monk is gone.

##### V

Nor wore the dead a stiller face  
Beneath the cerement's roll:  
His lips refusing out in words  
Their mystic thoughts to dole,  
His steadfast eye burnt inwardly,  
As burning out his soul.

##### VI

You would not think that brow could  
e'er  
Ungentle moods express,  
Yet seemed it, in this troubled world,  
Too calm for gentleness;  
When the very star that shines from  
far  
Shines trembling ne'ertheless.

## VII

It lacked, all need, the softening light  
Which other brows supply;  
We should conjoin the scathed trunks  
Of our humanity,  
That each leafless spray entwining may  
Look softer 'gainst the sky.

## VIII

None gazed within the poet's face,  
The poet gazed in none;  
He threw a lonely shadow straight  
Before the moon and sun,  
Affronting nature's heaven-dwelling  
creatures  
With wrong to nature done.

## IX

Because this poet daringly—  
The nature at his heart,  
And that quick tune along his veins  
He could not change by art—  
Had vowed his blood of brotherhood  
To a stagnant place apart.

## X

He did not vow in fear, or wrath,  
Or grief's fantastic whim,—  
But, weights and shows of sensual things  
Too closely crossing him,  
On his soul's eyelid the pressure slid  
And made its vision dim.

## XI

And darkening in the dark he strove  
'Twixt earth and sea and sky,  
To lose in shadow, wave, and cloud,  
His brother's haunting cry.  
The winds were welcome as they swept,  
God's five-day work he would accept,  
But let the rest go by.

## XII

He cried—'O touching, patient Earth,  
That weepest in thy glee,  
Whom God created very good,  
And very mournful, we!  
Thy voice of moan doth reach His throne,  
As Abel's rose from thee.

## XIII

'Poor crystal sky, with stars astray!  
Mad winds, that howling go  
From east to west! perplexed seas,  
That stagger from their blow!

O motion wild! O wave defiled!  
Our curse hath made you so.

## XIV

'*We!* and *our* curse! do *I* partake  
The desiccating sin?  
Have *I* the apple at my lips?  
The money-lust within?  
Do *I* human stand with the wounding  
hand,  
To the blasting heart akin?

## XV

'Thou solemn pathos of all things,  
For solemn joy designed!  
Behold, submissive to your cause  
A holy wrath I find,  
And, for your sake, the bondage break  
That knits me to my kind.

## XVI

'Hear me forswear man's sympathies,  
His pleasant yea and no,  
His riot on the piteous earth  
Whereon his thistles grow!  
His changing love—with stars above!  
His pride—with graves below!

## XVII

'Hear me forswear his roof by night,  
His bread and salt by day,  
His talkings at the wood-fire hearth,  
His greetings by the way,  
His answering looks, his systemed books,  
All man, for ay and ay.

## XVIII

'That so my purged, once human heart,  
From all the human rent,  
May gather strength to pledge and drink  
Your wine of wonderment,  
While you pardon me, all blessingly,  
The woe mine Adam sent.

## XIX

'And I shall feel your unseen looks  
Innumerable, constant, deep,  
And soft as haunted Adam once,  
Though sadder, round me creep,—  
As slumbering men have mystic ken  
Of watchers on their sleep.

## xx

'And ever, when I lift my brow  
At evening to the sun,  
No voice of woman or of child  
Recording "Day is done,"  
Your silences shall a love express,  
More deep than such an one.'

## PART THE SECOND

SHOWING TO WHOM THE VOW WAS  
DECLARED

## I

THE poet's vow was inly sworn,  
The poet's vow was told:  
He shared among his crowding friends  
The silver and the gold,  
They clasping bland his gift,—his hand  
In a somewhat slacker hold.

## II

They wended forth, the crowding friends,  
With farewells smooth and kind:  
They wended forth, the solaced friends,  
And left but twain behind:  
One loved him true as brothers do,  
And one was Rosalind.

## III

He said—'My friends have wended forth  
With farewells smooth and kind;  
Mine oldest friend, my plighted bride,  
Ye need not stay behind.  
Friend, wed my fair bride for my sake,  
And let my lands ancestral make  
A dower for Rosalind.

## IV

'And when beside your wassail board  
Ye bless your social lot,  
I charge you that the giver be  
In all his gifts forgot,  
Or alone of all his words recall  
The last,—Lament me not.'

## V

She looked upon him silently,  
With her large, doubting eyes,  
Like a child that never knew but love,  
Whom words of wrath surprise,

Till the rose did break from either cheek,  
And the sudden tears did rise.

## VI

She looked upon him mournfully,  
While her large eyes were grown  
Yet larger with the steady tears,  
Till, all his purpose known,  
She turned slow, as she would go—  
The tears were shaken down.

## VII

She turned slow, as she would go,  
Then quickly turned again,  
And gazing in his face to seek  
Some little touch of pain—  
'I thought,' she said,—but shook her  
head,—  
She tried that speech in vain.

## VIII

'I thought—but I am half a child,  
And very sage art thou—  
The teachings of the heaven and earth  
Should keep us soft and low:  
They have drawn my tears in early years,  
Or ere I wept—as now.

## IX

'But now that in thy face I read  
Their cruel homily,  
Before their beauty I would fain  
Untouched, unsoftened be,—  
If I indeed could look on even  
The senseless, loveless earth and heaven  
As thou canst look on me!

## X

'And couldest thou as coldly view  
Thy childhood's far abode,  
Where little feet kept time with thine  
Along the dewy sod,  
And thy mother's look from holy book,  
Rose, like a thought of God?

## XI

'O brother,—called so, ere her last  
Betrothing words were said!  
O fellow-watcher in her room,  
With hushed voice and tread!  
Rememberest thou how, hand in hand,  
O friend, O lover, we did stand,  
And knew that she was dead?

## XII

'I will not live Sir Roland's bride,—  
That dower I will not hold!  
I tread below my feet that go,  
These parchments bought and sold.  
The tears I weep are mine to keep,  
And worthier than thy gold.'

## XIII

The poet and Sir Roland stood  
Alone, each turned to each,  
Till Roland brake the silence left  
By that soft-throbbing speech—  
'Poor heart!' he cried, 'it vainly tried  
The distant heart to reach.'

## XIV

'And thou, O distant, sinful heart,  
That climbest up so high,  
To wrap and blind thee with the snows  
That cause to dream and die—  
What blessing can, from lips of man,  
Approach thee with his sigh?

## XV

'Aye, what from earth—create for man,  
And moaning in his moan!  
Aye, what from stars—revealed to man,  
And man-named, one by one?  
Aye, more! what blessing can be given,  
Where the Spirits seven do show in  
heaven

A MAN upon the throne?—

## XVI

'A man on earth HE wandered once,  
All meek and undefiled,  
And those who loved Him, said "He  
wept"—  
None ever said He smiled;  
Yet there might have been a smile unseen,  
When He bowed His holy face, I ween,  
To bless that happy child.

## XVII

'And now HE pleadeth up in heaven  
For our humanities,  
Till the ruddy light on seraphs' wings  
In pale emotion dies.  
They can better bear His Godhead's glare  
Than the pathos of His eyes.

## XVIII

'I will go pray our God to-day  
To teach thee how to scan  
His work divine, for human use  
Since earth on axle ran!

To teach thee to discern as plain  
His grief divine—the blood-drop's stain  
He left there, MAN for man.

## XIX

'So, for the blood's sake, shed by Him  
Whom angels God declare,  
Tears, like it, moist and warm with love,  
Thy reverent eyes shall wear,  
To see i' the face of Adam's race  
The nature God doth share.'

## XX

'I heard,' the poet said, 'thy voice  
As dimly as thy breath:  
The sound was like the noise of life  
To one anear his death,—  
Or of waves that fail to stir the pale  
Sere leaf they roll beneath.'

## XXI

'And still between the sound and me  
White creatures like a mist  
Did interfloat confusedly,—  
Mysterious shapes unwist!  
Across my heart and across my brow  
I felt them droop like wreaths of snow,  
To still the pulse they kist.

## XXII

'The castle and its lands are thine—  
The poor's—it shall be done.  
Go, *man*, to love! I go to live  
In Courland hall, alone.  
The bats along the ceilings cling,  
The lizards in the floors do run,  
And storms and years have worn and reft  
The stain by human builders left  
In working at the stone.'

## PART THE THIRD

## SHOWING HOW THE VOW WAS KEPT

## I

HE dwelt alone, and sun and moon  
Were witness that he made  
Rejection of his humanness  
Until they seemed to fade:  
His face did so; for he did grow  
Of his own soul afraid.

## II

The self-poised God may dwell alone  
 With inward glorying,  
 But God's chief angel waiteth for  
 A brother's voice, to sing;  
 And a lonely creature of sinful nature—  
 It is an awful thing.

## III

An awful thing that feared itself  
 While many years did roll,  
 A lonely man, a feeble man,  
 A part beneath the whole—  
 He bore by day, he bore by night  
 That pressure of God's infinite  
 Upon his finite soul.

## IV

The poet at his lattice sate,  
 And downward looked he;  
 Three Christians wended by to prayers,  
 With mute ones in their ee:  
 Each turned above a face of love,  
 And called him to the far chapelle  
 With voice more tuneful than its bell—  
 But still they wended three.

## V

There journeyed by a bridal pomp,  
 A bridegroom and his dame:  
 He speaketh low for happiness,  
 She blusheth red for shame;  
 But never a tone of benison  
 From out the lattice came.

## VI

A little child with inward song,  
 No louder noise to dare,  
 Stood near the wall to see at play  
 The lizards green and rare—  
 Unblessed the while for his childish smile  
 Which cometh unaware.

## PART THE FOURTH

SHOWING HOW ROSALIND FARED BY  
THE KEEPING OF THE VOW

## I

In death-sheets lieth Rosalind,  
 As white and still as they;  
 And the old nurse that watched her bed,  
 Rose up with 'Well-a-day!'

And oped the casement to let in  
 The sun, and that sweet doubtful din  
 Which droppeth from the grass and bough  
 Sans wind and bird, none knoweth how—  
 To cheer her as she lay.

## II

The old nurse started when she saw  
 Her sudden look of woe;  
 But the quick wan tremblings round her  
 mouth  
 In a meek smile did go,  
 And calm she said, 'When I am dead,  
 Dear nurse, it shall be so.

## III

'Till then, shut out those sights and  
 sounds,  
 And pray God pardon me,  
 That I without this pain no more  
 His blessed works can see!  
 And lean beside me, loving nurse,  
 That thou mayst hear, ere I am worse,  
 What thy last love should be.'

## IV

The loving nurse leant over her,  
 As white she lay beneath;  
 The old eyes searching, dim with life,  
 The young ones dim with death,  
 To read their look if sound forsook  
 The trying, trembling breath.

## V

'When all this feeble breath is done,  
 And I on bier am laid,  
 My tresses smoothed for never a feast,  
 My body in shroud arrayed,  
 Uplift each palm in a saintly calm,  
 As if that still I prayed.

## VI

'And heap beneath mine head the flowers  
 You stoop so low to pull,—  
 The little white flowers from the wood,  
 Which grow there in the cool,  
 Which *he* and I, in childhood's games,  
 Went plucking, knowing not their names,  
 And filled thine apron full.

## VII

'Weep not! I weep not. Death is  
 strong,  
 The eyes of Death are dry!  
 But lay this scroll upon my breast,  
 When hushed its heavings lie,

and wait awhile for the corpse's smile  
Which shineth presently.

## VIII

And when it shineth, straightway call  
Thy youngest children dear,  
And bid them gently carry me  
All barefaced on the bier—  
But bid them pass my kirkyard grass  
That waveth long anear.

## IX

'And up the bank where I used to sit  
And dream what life would be,  
Along the brook, with its sunny look  
Akin to living glee,—  
O'er the windy hill, through the forest  
still,  
Let them gently carry me.

## X

'And through the piney forest still,  
And down the open moorland—  
Round where the sea beats mistily  
And blindly on the foreland;  
And let them chant that hymn I know,  
Bearing me soft, bearing me slow,  
To the ancient hall of Courland.

## XI

'And when withal they near the hall,  
In silence let them lay  
My bier before the bolted door,  
And leave it for a day.  
For I have vowed, though I am proud,  
To go there as a guest in shroud,  
And not be turned away.'

## XII

The old nurse looked within her eyes,  
Whose mutual look was gone;  
The old nurse stooped upon her mouth,  
Whose answering voice was done;  
And nought she heard, till a little bird  
Upon the casement's woodbine  
swinging,  
Broke out into a loud sweet singing  
For joy o' the summer sun.  
'Alack! alack!'—she watched no  
more—  
With head on knee she wailed sore;  
And the little bird sang o'er and o'er  
For joy o' the summer sun.

## PART THE FIFTH

## SHOWING HOW THE VOW WAS BROKEN

## I

THE poet oped his bolted door,  
The midnight sky to view:  
A spirit-feel was in the air  
Which seemed to touch his spirit bare  
Whenever his breath he drew;  
And the stars a liquid softness had,  
As alone their holiness forbade  
Their falling with the dew.

## II

They shine upon the steadfast hills,  
Upon the swinging tide,  
Upon the narrow track of beach,  
And the murmuring pebbles pied;  
They shine on every lovely place,  
They shine upon the corpse's face,  
As *it* were fair beside.

## III

It lay before him, humanlike,  
Yet so unlike a thing!  
More awful in its shrouded pomp  
Than any crownèd king—  
All calm and cold, as it did hold  
Some secret, glorying.

## IV

A heavier weight than of its clay  
Clung to his heart and knee:  
As if those folded palms could strike,  
He staggered groaningly,  
And then o'erhung, without a groan,  
The meek close mouth that smiled alone,  
Whose speech the scroll must be.

## THE WORDS OF ROSALIND'S SCROLL

'I LEFT thee last, a child at heart,  
A woman scarce in years:  
I come to thee, a solemn corpse,  
Which neither feels nor fears.  
I have no breath to use in sighs;  
They laid the death-weights on mine  
eyes,  
To seal them safe from tears.  
'Look on me with thine own calm look—  
I meet it calm as thou!  
No look of thine can change *this* smile,  
Or break thy sinful vow.

I tell thee that my poor scorned heart  
Is of thine earth . . . thine earth, a part—  
It cannot vex thee now.

'But out, alas! these words are writ  
By a living, loving One,  
Adown whose cheeks, the proofs of life,  
The warm quick tears do run.  
Ah, let the unloving corpse control  
Thy scorn back from the loving soul  
Whose place of rest is won.

'I have prayed for thee with burstingsobs,  
When passion's course was free.  
I have prayed for thee with silent lips,  
In the anguish none could see.  
They whispered oft, "She sleepeth  
soft"—

But I only prayed for thee.

'Go to! I pray for thee no more—  
The corpse's tongue is still:  
Its folded fingers point to heaven,  
But point there stiff and chill.  
No farther wrong, no farther woe  
Hath licence from the sin below  
Its tranquil heart to thrill.

'I charge thee, by the living's prayer,  
And the dead's silence,  
To wring from out thy soul a cry  
Which God shall hear and bless!  
Lest Heaven's own palm droop in my  
hand,  
And pale among the saints I stand,  
A saint companionless.'

## v

Bow lower down before the throne,  
Triumphant Rosalind!  
He boweth on thy corpse his face,  
And weepeth as the blind.  
'Twas a dread sight to see them so—  
For the senseless corpse rocked to and fro  
With the wail of his living mind.

## vi

But dreader sight, could such be seen,  
His inward mind did lie,  
Whose long-subjected humanness  
Gave out its lion cry,  
And fiercely rent its tenement  
In a mortal agony.

## vii

I tell you, friends, had you heard his wail,  
'Twould haunt you in court and mart,  
And in merry feast, until you set  
Your cup down to depart—  
That weeping wild of a reckless child  
From a proud man's broken heart.

## viii

O broken heart, O broken vow,  
That wore so proud a feature!  
God, grasping as a thunderbolt  
The man's rejected nature,  
Smote him therewith, i' the presence  
high  
Of his so worshipped earth and sky  
That looked on all indifferently—  
A wailing human creature.

## ix

A human creature found too weak  
To bear his human pain!  
(May Heaven's dear grace have spoken  
peace  
To his dying heart and brain!)  
For when they came at dawn of day  
To lift the lady's corpse away,  
Her bier was holding twain.

## x

They dug beneath the kirkyard grass,  
For both, one dwelling deep,  
To which, when years had mossed the  
stone,  
Sir Roland brought his little son  
To watch the funeral heap.  
And when the happy boy would rather  
Turn upward his blithe eyes to see  
The wood-doves nodding from the tree—  
'Nay, boy, look downward,' said his  
father,  
'Upon this human dust asleep.  
And hold it in thy constant ken  
That God's own unity compresses  
(One into one) the human many,  
And that his everlastingness is  
The bond which is not loosed by any!—  
That thou and I this law must keep,  
If not in love, in sorrow then!  
Though smiling not like other men,  
Still, like them, we must weep.'

## MISCELLANEOUS POEMS

### THE ROMAUNT OF MARGRET

Can my affections find out nothing best,  
But still and still remove?

QUARLES.

I

I PLANT a tree whose leaf  
The yew-tree leaf will suit ;  
But when its shade is o'er you laid,  
Turn round and pluck the fruit.  
Now reach my harp from off the wall  
Where shines the sun aslant !  
The sun may shine and we be cold—  
O hearken, loving hearts and bold,  
Unto my wild romaunt,  
Margret, Margret.

II

Sitteth the fair ladye  
Close to the river side,  
Which runneth on with a merry tone  
Her merry thoughts to guide.  
It runneth through the trees,  
It runneth by the hill,  
Nathless the lady's thoughts have found  
A way more pleasant still.  
Margret, Margret.

III

The night is in her hair  
And giveth shade to shade,  
And the pale moonlight on her forehead  
white  
Like a spirit's hand is laid ;  
Her lips part with a smile  
Instead of speakings done :  
I ween, she thinketh of a voice,  
Albeit uttering none.  
Margret, Margret.

IV

All little birds do sit  
With heads beneath their wings :  
Nature doth seem in a mystic dream,  
Absorbed from her living things.

That dream by that ladye  
Is certes unpartook,  
For she looketh to the high cold stars  
With a tender human look.  
Margret, Margret.

V

The lady's shadow lies  
Upon the running river ;  
It lieth no less in its quietness,  
For that which resteth never :  
Most like a trusting heart  
Upon a passing faith,—  
Or as, upon the course of life,  
The steadfast doom of death.  
Margret, Margret.

VI

The lady doth not move,  
The lady doth not dream,  
Yet she seeth her shade no longer laid  
In rest upon the stream.  
It shaketh without wind,  
It parteth from the tide.  
It standeth upright in the cleft moonlight,  
It sitteth at her side.  
Margret, Margret.

VII

Look in its face, ladye,  
And keep thee from thy swoond !  
With a spirit bold, thy pulses hold,  
And hear its voice's sound.  
For so will sound thy voice,  
When thy face is to the wall ;  
And such will be thy face, ladye,  
When the maidens work thy pall.  
Margret, Margret.

VIII

'Am I not like to thee?'—  
The voice was calm and low ;  
And between each word you might have  
heard  
The silent forests grow.  
'*The like may sway the like,*'  
By which mysterious law  
Mine eyes from thine and my lips from  
thine  
The light and breath may draw.  
Margret, Margret.

## IX

'My lips do need thy breath,  
My lips do need thy smile,  
And my pallid eyne, that light in thine  
Which met the stars erewhile.  
Yet go with light and life,  
If that thou lovest one  
In all the earth, who loveth thee  
As truly as the sun,  
Margret, Margret.'

## X

Her cheek had waxed white  
Like cloud at fall of snow;  
Then like to one at set of sun  
It waxed red also;  
For love's name maketh bold,  
As if the loved were near.  
And then she sighed the deep long sigh  
Which cometh after fear.  
Margret, Margret.

## XI

'Now, sooth, I fear thee not—  
Shall never fear thee now!  
(And a noble sight was the sudden light  
Which lit her lifted brow.)  
'Can earth be dry of streams?  
Or hearts, of love?' she said;  
'Who doubteth love, can know not love:  
He is already dead.'  
Margret, Margret.

## XII

'I have' . . . and here her lips  
Some word in pause did keep,  
And gave the while a quiet smile,  
As if they paused in sleep,—  
'I have' . . . a brother dear,  
A knight of knightly fame!  
I broidered him a knightly scarf  
With letters of my name.  
Margret, Margret.

## XIII

'I fed his grey goss-hawk,  
I kissed his fierce bloodhound,  
I sate at home when he might come  
And caught his horn's far sound:  
I sang him hunters' songs,  
I poured him the red wine—  
He looked across the cup and said,  
*I love thee, sister mine.*  
Margret, Margret.

## XIV

IT trembled on the grass,  
With a low, shadowy laughter;  
Thesounding river which rolled for ever,  
Stood dumb and stagnant after.  
'Brave knight thy brother is!  
But better loveth he  
Thy chalice wine than thy chanted song,  
And better both, than thee,  
Margret, Margret.'

## XV

The lady did not heed  
The river's silence while  
Her own thoughts still ran at their will,  
And calm was still her smile.  
'My little sister wears  
The look our mother wore:  
I smooth her locks with a golden comb,  
I bless her evermore.'  
Margret, Margret.

## XVI

'I gave her my first bird,  
When first my voice it knew;  
I made her share my posies rare,  
And told her where they grew.  
I taught her God's dear name  
With prayer and praise, to tell—  
She looked from heaven into my face,  
And said, *I love thee well.*  
Margret, Margret.

## XVII

IT trembled on the grass  
With a low, shadowy laughter:  
You could see each bird as it woke and  
stared  
Through the shrivelled foliage after.  
'Fair child thy sister is!  
But better loveth she  
Thy golden comb than thy gathered  
flowers,  
And better both, than thee,  
Margret, Margret.'

## XVIII

The lady did not heed  
The withering on the bough:  
Still calm her smile, albeit the while  
A little pale her brow.

'I have a father old,  
The lord of ancient halls;  
An hundred friends are in his court,  
Yet only me he calls.  
Margret, Margret.

## XX

'An hundred knights are in his court,  
Yet read I by his knee;  
And when forth they go to the tourney  
show,  
I rise not up to see.  
'Tis a weary book to read,  
My tryst's at set of sun,  
But loving and dear beneath the stars  
Is his blessing when I've done.'  
Margret, Margret.

## XX

IT trembled on the grass  
With a low, shadowy laughter;  
And moon and star, though bright and far,  
Did shrink and darken after.  
High lord thy father is!  
But better loveth he  
His ancient halls than his hundred friends,  
His ancient halls, than thee.  
Margret, Margret.'

## XXI

The lady did not heed  
That the far stars did fail:  
Still calm her smile, albeit the while . . .  
Nay, but she is not pale!  
'I have a more than friend  
Across the mountains dim:  
No other's voice is soft to me,  
Unless it nameth *him*.'  
Margret, Margret.

## XXII

'Though louder beats mine heart  
I know his tread again,  
And his far plume ay, unless turned  
away,  
For the tears do blind me then.  
We brake no gold, a sign  
Of stronger faith to be,—  
But I wear his last look in my soul,  
Which said, *I love but thee!*'  
Margret, Margret.

## XXIII

IT trembled on the grass  
With a low, shadowy laughter;  
And the wind did toll, as a passing soul  
Were sped by church-bell after;  
And shadows, 'stead of light,  
Fell from the stars above,  
In flakes of darkness on her face  
Still bright with trusting love.  
Margret, Margret.

## XXIV

'He loved but only thee!  
That love is transient too:  
The wild hawk's bill doth dabble still  
I' the mouth that vowed thee true.  
Will he open his dull eyes,  
When tears fall on his brow?  
Behold, the death-worm to his heart  
Is a nearer thing than *thou*,  
Margret, Margret.'

## XXV

Her face was on the ground—  
None saw the agony,  
But the men at sea did that night agree  
They heard a drowning cry;  
And when the morning brake,  
Fast rolled the river's tide,  
With the green trees waving overhead,  
And a white corse laid beside.  
Margret, Margret.

## XXVI

A knight's bloodhound and he  
The funeral watch did keep;  
With a thought o' the chase he stroked  
his face  
As it howled to see him weep.  
A fair child kissed the dead,  
But shrank before its cold;  
And alone yet proudly in his hall  
Did stand a baron old.  
Margret, Margret.

## XXVII

Hang up my harp again!  
I have no voice for song:  
Not song, but wail, and mourners pale,  
Not bards, to love belong.  
O failing human love!  
O light, by darkness known!  
O false, the while thou treadest earth!  
O deaf beneath the stone!  
Margret, Margret.

ISOBEL'S CHILD

So find we profit,  
By losing of our prayers.  
SHAKESPEARE.

I

To rest the weary nurse has gone.  
An eight-day watch had watchèd she,  
Still rocking beneath sun and moon  
The baby on her knee.  
Till Isobel its mother said,  
'The fever waneth—wend to bed,  
For now the watch comes round to me.'

II

Then wearily the nurse did throw  
Her pallet in the darkest place  
Of that sick room, and slept and  
dreamed :  
For, as the gusty wind did blow  
The night-lamp's flare across her face,  
She saw, or seemed to see, but dreamed,  
That the poplars tall on the opposite  
hill,  
The seven tall poplars on the hill,  
Did clasp the setting sun until  
His rays dropped from him, pined and  
still  
As blossoms in frost !  
Till he waned and paled, so weirdly  
crossed,  
To the colour of moonlight which doth  
pass  
Over the dank ridged churchyard grass.  
The poplars held the sun, and he  
The eyes of the nurse that they should  
not see,  
Not for a moment, the babe on her knee,  
Though she shuddered to feel that it  
grew to be  
Too chill, and lay too heavily.

III

She only dreamed ; for all the while  
'Twas Lady Isobel that kept  
The little baby,—and it slept  
Fast, warm, as if its mother's smile,  
Laden with love's dewy weight,  
And red as rose of Harpocrate  
Dropt upon its eyelids, pressed  
Lashes to cheek in a sealèd rest.

IV

And more and more smiled Isobel  
To see the baby sleep so well—  
She knew not that she smiled.  
Against the lattice, dull and wild  
Drive the heavy droning drops,  
Drop by drop, the sound being one—  
As momentarily time's segments fall  
On the ear of God, who hears through all  
Eternity's unbroken monotone.  
And more and more smiled Isobel  
To see the baby sleep so well—  
She knew not that she smiled.  
The wind in intermission stops  
Down in the beechen forest,  
Then cries aloud  
As one at the sorest,  
Self-stung, self-driven,  
And rises up to its very tops,  
Stiffening erect the branches bowed,  
Dilating with a tempest-soul  
The trees that with their dark hands break  
Through their own outline and heavily roll  
Shadows as massive as clouds in heaven,  
Across the castle lake.  
And more and more smiled Isobel  
To see the baby sleep so well ;  
She knew not that she smiled ;  
She knew not that the storm was wild.  
Through the uproar drear she could not  
hear  
The castle clock which struck anear—  
She heard the low, light breathing of her  
child.

V

O sight for wondering look !  
While the external nature broke  
Into such abandonment,  
While the very mist heart-rent  
By the lightning, seemed to eddy  
Against nature, with a din,  
A sense of silence and of steady  
Natural calm appeared to come  
From things without, and enter in  
The human creature's room.

VI

So motionless she sate,  
The babe asleep upon her knees,  
You might have dreamed their souls had  
gone  
Away to things inanimate,

In such to live, in such to moan;  
And that their bodies had ta'en back,  
In mystic change, all silences  
That cross the sky in cloudy rack,  
Or dwell beneath the reedy ground  
In waters safe from their own sound.

Only she wore  
The deepening smile I named before,  
And *that* a deepening love expressed;  
And who at once can love and rest?

## vii

In sooth the smile that then was keeping  
Watch upon the baby sleeping,  
Floated with its tender light  
Downward, from the drooping eyes,  
Upward, from the lips apart,  
Over cheeks which had grown white  
With an eight-day weeping.  
All smiles come in such a wise,  
Where tears shall fall or have of old—  
Like northern lights that fill the heart  
Of heaven in sign of cold.

## viii

Motionless she sate.  
Her hair had fallen by its weight  
On each side of her smile, and lay  
Very blackly on the arm  
Where the baby nestled warm,  
Pale as baby carved in stone  
Seen by glimpses of the moon  
Up a dark cathedral aisle.  
But, through the storm, no moonbeam fell  
Upon the child of Isobel—  
Perhaps you saw it by the ray  
Alone of her still smile.

## ix

A solemn thing it is to me  
To look upon a babe that sleeps;  
Wearing in its spirit-deeps  
The undeveloped mystery  
Of our Adam's taint and woe,  
Which, when they developed be,  
Will not let it slumber so!  
Lying new in life beneath  
The shadow of the coming death,  
With that soft, low, quiet breath,  
As if it felt the sun!  
Knowing all things by their blooms,  
Not their roots, yea, sun and sky,  
Only by the warmth that comes  
Out of each,—earth, only by

The pleasant hues that o'er it run,—  
And human love, by drops of sweet  
White nourishment still hanging round  
The little mouth so slumber-bound.  
All which broken sentience  
And conclusion incomplete,  
Will gather and unite and climb  
To an immortality  
Good or evil, each sublime,  
Through life and death to life again.  
O little lids, now folded fast,  
Must ye learn to drop at last  
Our large and burning tears?  
O warm quick body, must thou lie,  
When the time comes round to die,  
Still, from all the whirl of years,  
Bare of all the joy and pain?—  
O small frail being, wilt thou stand  
At God's right hand,  
Lifting up those sleeping eyes  
Dilated by great destinies,  
To an endless waking? thrones and  
seraphim,

Through the long ranks of their solemnities,  
Sunning thee with calm looks of Heaven's  
surprise,  
But thine alone on Him?—  
Or else, self-willed, to tread the Godless  
place  
(God keep thy will!), feel thine own  
energies  
Cold, strong, objectless, like a dead  
man's clasp,  
The sleepless deathless life within thee,  
grasp,—  
While myriad faces, like one changeless  
face,  
With woe *not love's*, shall glass thee  
everywhere,  
And overcome thee with thine own  
despair?

## x

More soft, less solemn images  
Drifted o'er the lady's heart,  
Silently as snow.  
She had seen eight days depart  
Hour by hour, on bended knees,  
With pale-wrung hands and prayings low  
And broken, through which came the  
sound  
Of tears that fell against the ground,

Making sad stops :—‘ Dear Lord, dear Lord !’

She still had prayed (the heavenly word,

Broken by an earthly sigh),  
—‘ Thou, who didst not erst deny  
The mother-joy to Mary mild,  
Blessed in the blessed child,  
Which hearkened in meek babyhood  
Her cradle-hymn, albeit used  
To all that music interfused

In breasts of angels high and good!  
Oh, take not, Lord, my babe away—  
Oh, take not to Thy songful heaven  
The pretty baby Thou hast given,  
Or ere that I have seen him play  
Around his father’s knees and known  
That *he* knew how my love has gone

From all the world to him.

Think, God among the cherubim,  
How I shall shiver every day  
In Thy June sunshine, knowing where  
The grave-grass keeps it from his fair  
Still cheeks ! and feel at every tread  
His little body which is dead  
And hidden in the turfy fold,  
Doth make thy whole warm earth a-cold !

O God, I am so young, so young—  
I am not used to tears at nights  
Instead of slumber—nor to prayer  
With sobbing lips and hands out-wrung !  
Thou knowest all my prayings were  
“ I bless Thee, God, for past delights—  
Thank God ! ” I am not used to bear  
Hard thoughts of death ; the earth doth  
cover

No face from me of friend or lover.  
And must the first who teaches me  
The form of shrouds and funerals, be  
Mine own first-born beloved ? he  
Who taught me first this mother-love ?  
Dear Lord, who spreadest out above  
Thy loving, transpierced hands to meet  
All lifted hearts with blessing sweet,—  
Pierce not my heart, my tender heart ;  
Thou madest tender ! Thou who art  
So happy in Thy heaven away !  
Take not mine only bliss away !’

XI

She so had prayed : and God, who hears  
Through seraph-songs the sound of tears,

From that beloved babe had ta’en  
The fever and the beating pain.  
And more and more smiled Isobel  
To see the baby sleep so well  
(She knew not that she smiled, I wis),  
Until the pleasant gradual thought  
Which near her heart the smile en-  
wrought,  
Now soft and slow, itself, did seem  
To float along a happy dream,  
Beyond it into speech like this.

XII

‘ I prayed for thee, my little child,  
And God has heard my prayer !  
And when thy babyhood is gone,  
We two together, undefiled  
By men’s repinings, will kneel down  
Upon His earth which will be fair  
(Not covering thee, sweet ! ) to us twain,  
And give Him thankful praise.’

XIII

Dully and wildly drives the rain :  
Against the lattices drives the rain.

XIV

‘ I thank Him now, that I can think  
Of those same future days,  
Nor from the harmless image shrink  
Of what I there might see—  
Strange babies on their mothers’ knee,  
Whose innocent soft faces might  
From off mine eyelids strike the light,  
With looks not meant for me !’

XV

Gustily blows the wind through the rain,  
As against the lattices drives the rain.

XVI

‘ But now, O baby mine, together  
We turn this hope of ours again  
To many an hour of summer weather,  
When we shall sit and intertwine  
Our spirits, and instruct each other  
In the pure loves of child and mother !  
Two human loves make one divine.’

XVII

The thunder tears through the wind and  
the rain,  
As full on the lattices drives the rain.

## XVIII

'My little child, what wilt thou choose?  
 Now let me look at thee and ponder.  
 What gladness, from the gladnesses  
 Futurity is spreading under  
 Thy gladsome sight? Beneath the trees  
 Wilt thou lean all day, and lose  
 Thy spirit with the river seen  
 Intermittently between  
 The winding beechen alleys,—  
 Half in labour, half repose,  
 Like a shepherd keeping sheep,  
 Thou, with only thoughts to keep  
 Which never a bound will overpass,  
 And which are innocent as those  
 That feed among Arcadian valleys  
 Upon the dewy grass!'

## XIX

The large white owl that with age is  
 blind,  
 That hath sate for years in the old tree  
 hollow,  
 Is carried away in a gust of wind!  
 His wings could bear him not as fast  
 As he goeth now the lattice past—  
 He is borne by the winds; the rains do  
 follow:  
 His white wings to the blast out-flowing,  
 He hooteth in going,  
 And still, in the lightnings, coldly glitter  
 His round unblinking eyes.

## XX

'Or, baby, wilt thou think it fitter  
 To be eloquent and wise,—  
 One upon whose lips the air  
 Turns to solemn verities,  
 For men to breathe anew, and win  
 A deeper-seated life within?  
 Wilt be a philosopher,  
 By whose voice the earth and skies  
 Shall speak to the unborn?  
 Or a poet, broadly spreading  
 The golden immortalities  
 Of thy soul on nature's lorn  
 And poor of such, them all to guard  
 From their decay,—beneath thy treading,  
 Earth's flowers recovering hues of  
 Eden,—  
 And stars, drawn downward by thy looks,  
 To shine ascendant in thy books!'

## XXI

The tame hawk in the castle-yard,  
 How it screams to the lightning, with  
 its wet  
 Jagged plumes overhanging the parapet!  
 And at the lady's door the hound  
 Scratches with a crying sound.

## XXII

'But, O my babe, thy lids are laid  
 Close, fast upon thy cheek,—  
 And not a dream of power and sheen  
 Can make a passage up between;  
 Thy heart is of thy mother's made,  
 Thy looks are very meek;  
 And it will be their chosen place  
 To rest on some beloved face,  
 As these on thine—and let the noise  
 Of the whole world go on, nor drown  
 The tender silence of thy joys!  
 Or when that silence shall have grown  
 Too tender for itself, the same  
 Yearning for sound,—to look above  
 And utter its one meaning, LOVE,  
 That *He* may hear His name!'

## XXIII

No wind, no rain, no thunder!  
 The waters had trickled not slowly,  
 The thunder was not spent,  
 Nor the wind near finishing.  
 Who would have said that the storm  
 was diminishing?  
 No wind, no rain, no thunder!  
 Their noises dropped asunder  
 From the earth and the firmament,  
 From the towers and the lattices,  
 Abrupt and echoless  
 As ripe fruits on the ground unshaken  
 wholly—  
 As life in death!  
 And sudden and solemn the silence fell,  
 Startling the heart of Isobel  
 As the tempest could not.  
 Against the door went panting the breath  
 Of the lady's hound whose cry was still,  
 And she, constrained howe'er she would  
 not,  
 Lifted her eyes, and saw the moon  
 Looking out of heaven alone  
 Upon the poplared hill,—  
 A calm of God, made visible  
 That men might bless it at their will.

XXIV

The moonshine on the baby's face  
Falleth clear and cold.  
The mother's looks have fallen back  
To the same place;  
Because no moon with silver rack,  
Nor broad sunrise in jasper skies,  
Has power to hold  
Our loving eyes,  
Which still revert, as ever must  
Wonder and Hope, to gaze on the dust.

XXV

The moonshine on the baby's face  
Cold and clear remaineth:  
The mother's looks do shrink away,—  
The mother's looks return to stay,  
As charmed by what paineth.  
Is any glamour in the case?  
Is it dream or is it sight?  
Hath the change upon the wild  
Elements, that signs the night,  
Passed upon the child?  
It is not dream, but sight!—

XXVI

The babe has awakened from sleep,  
And unto the gaze of its mother  
Bent over it, lifted another!  
Not the baby-looks that go  
Unaimingly to and fro,  
But an earnest gazing deep,  
Such as soul gives soul at length,  
When, by work and wail of years,  
It winneth a solemn strength,  
And mourneth as it wears.  
A strong man could not brook  
With pulse unhurried by fears  
To meet that baby's look  
O'er glazed by manhood's tears—  
The tears of a man full grown,  
With a power to wring our own,  
In the eyes all undefiled  
Of a little three-months' child!  
To see that babe-brow wrought  
By the witnessing of thought,  
To judgement's prodigy!  
And the small soft mouth unweaned,  
By mother's kiss o'erleaned  
(Putting the sound of loving  
Where no sound else was moving,  
Except the speechless cry),

Quickened to mind's expression,  
Shaped to articulation,  
Yea, uttering words—yea, naming woe,  
In tones that with it strangely went,  
Because so baby-innocent,  
As the child spake unto the mother so.—

XXVII

'O mother, mother, loose thy prayer!  
Christ's name hath made it strong.  
It bindeth me, it holdeth me  
With its most loving cruelty,  
From floating my new soul along  
The happy heavenly air.  
It bindeth me, it holdeth me  
In all this dark, upon this dull  
Low earth, by only weepers trod!—  
It bindeth me, it holdeth me!—  
Mine angel looketh sorrowful  
Upon the face of God<sup>1</sup>.

XXVIII

'Mother, mother, can I dream  
Beneath your earthly trees?  
I had a vision and a gleam—  
I heard a sound more sweet than these  
When rippled by the wind.  
Did you see the Dove with wings  
Bathed in golden glistenings  
From a sunless light behind,  
Dropping on me from the sky  
Soft as mother's kiss, until  
I seemed to leap, and yet was still  
Saw you how His love-large eye  
Looked upon me mystic calms,  
Till the power of His divine  
Vision was indrawn to mine?

XXIX

'Oh, the dream within the dream!  
I saw celestial places even.  
Oh, the vistas of high palms,  
Making finites of delight  
Through the heavenly infinite—  
Lifting up their green still tops  
To the heaven of Heaven!  
Oh, the sweet life-tree that drops  
Shade like light across the river  
Glorified in its for-ever  
Flowing from the Throne!

<sup>1</sup> For I say unto you, That in heaven their angels do always behold the face of my Father which is in heaven.—*Matt.* xviii. 10.

Oh, the shining holinesses  
 Of the thousand, thousand faces  
 God-sunned by the thronèd ONE!  
 And made intense with such a love,  
 That though I saw them turned above,  
 Each loving seemed for also me!  
 And, oh, the Unspeakable, the HE,  
 The manifest in secrecies,  
 Yet of mine own heart partaker,—  
 With the overcoming look  
 Of One who hath been once forsook,  
 And blesseth the forsaker.  
 Mother, mother, let me go  
 Toward the Face that looketh so.  
 Through the mystic, wingèd Four  
 Whose are inward, outward eyes  
 Dark with light of mysteries,  
 And the restless evermore  
 "Holy, holy, holy,"—through  
 The sevenfold Lamps that burn in view  
 Of cherubim and seraphim,—  
 Through the four-and-twenty crowned  
 Stately elders, white around,  
 Suffer me to go to Him!

## xxx

'Is your wisdom very wise,  
 Mother, on the narrow earth,  
 Very happy, very worth  
 That I should stay to learn?  
 Are these air-corrupting sighs  
 Fashioned by unlearnèd breath?  
 Do the students' lamps that burn  
 All night, illumine death?  
 Mother, albeit this be so,  
 Loose thy prayer and let me go  
 Where that bright chief angel stands  
 Apart from all his brother bands,  
 Too glad for smiling, having bent  
 In angelic wilderment  
 O'er the depths of God, and brought  
 Reeling thence, one only thought  
 To fill his whole eternity.  
 He the teacher is for me!—  
 He can teach what I would know—  
 Mother, mother, let me go!

## xxxi

'Can your poet make an Eden  
 No winter will undo,  
 And light a starry fire while heeding  
 His hearth's is burning too?  
 Drown in music the earth's din,

And keep his own wild soul within  
 The law of his own harmony?—  
 Mother, albeit this be so,  
 Let me to my Heaven go!  
 A little harp me waits thereby—  
 A harp whose strings are golden all,  
 And tuned to music spherical,  
 Hanging on the green life-tree  
 Where no willows ever be.  
 Shall I miss that harp of mine?  
 Mother, no!—the Eye divine  
 Turned upon it, makes it shine;  
 And when I touch it, poems sweet  
 Like separate souls shall fly from it  
 Each to an immortal fytte.  
 We shall all be poets there,  
 Gazing on the chiefest Fair.

## xxxii

'Love! earth's love! and *can* we love  
 Fixedly where all things move?  
 Can the sinning love each other?

Mother, mother,  
 I tremble in thy close embrace,  
 I feel thy tears adown my face,  
 Thy prayers do keep me out of bliss—  
 O dreary earthly love!

Loose thy prayer and let me go  
 To the place which loving is  
 Yet not sad; and when is given  
 Escape to *thee* from this below,  
 Thou shalt behold me that I wait  
 For thee beside the happy Gate,  
 And silence shall be up in heaven  
 To hear our greeting kiss.'

## xxxiii

The nurse awakes in the morning sun,  
 And starts to see beside her bed  
 The lady with a grandeur spread  
 Like pathos o'er her face,—as one  
 God-satisfied and earth-undone.

The babe upon her arm was dead!  
 And the nurse could utter forth no cry,—  
 She was awed by the calm in the mother's  
 eye.

## xxxiv

'Wake, nurse!' the lady said;  
 'We are waking—he and I—  
 I, on earth, and he, in sky!  
 And thou must help me to o'erlay  
 With garment white, this little clay  
 Which needs no more our lullaby.

xxxv

'I changed the cruel prayer I made,  
And bowed my meekened face, and  
prayed  
That God would do His will! and thus  
He did it, nurse! He parted us.  
And His sun shows victorious  
The dead calm face,—and I am calm,  
And Heaven is hearkening a new psalm.

xxxvi

'This earthly noise is too anear,  
Too loud, and will not let me hear  
The little harp. My death will soon  
Make silence.'

And a sense of tune,  
A satisfied love meanwhile  
Which nothing earthly could despoil,  
Sang on within her soul.

xxxvii

Oh you,  
Earth's tender and impassioned few,  
Take courage to entrust your love  
To Him so named, who guards above  
Its ends and shall fulfil!  
Breaking the narrow prayers that may  
Befit your narrow hearts, away  
In His broad, loving will.

THE ROMAUNT OF THE PAGE

I

A KNIGHT of gallant deeds  
And a young page at his side,  
From the holy war in Palestine  
Did slow and thoughtful ride,  
Aseach were a palmer and told for beads  
The dews of the eventide.

II

'O young page,' said the knight,  
'A noble page art thou!  
Thou fearest not to steep in blood  
The curls upon thy brow;  
And once in the tent, and twice in the  
fight,  
Didst ward me a mortal blow.'

III

'O brave knight,' said the page,  
'Or ere we hither came,  
We talked in tent, we talked in field,  
Of the bloody battle-game;  
But here, below this greenwood bough,  
I cannot speak the same.

IV

'Our troop is far behind,  
The woodland calm is new,  
Our steeds, with slow grass-muffled  
hoofs,  
Tread deep the shadows through;  
And in my mind some blessing kind  
Is dropping with the dew.

v

'The woodland calm is pure—  
I cannot choose but have  
A thought from these, o' the beechen-  
trees  
Which in our England wave,  
And of the little finches fine  
Which sang there, while in Palestine  
The warrior-hilt we drave.

VI

'Methinks, a moment gone,  
I heard my mother pray!  
I heard, sir knight, the prayer for me  
Whercin she passed away;  
And I know the heavens are leaning  
down  
To hear what I shall say.'

VII

The page spake calm and high,  
As of no mean degree;  
Perhaps he felt in nature's broad  
Full heart, his own was free:  
And the knight looked up to his lifted eye,  
Then answered smilingly:—

VIII

'Sir page, I pray your grace!  
Certes, I meant not so  
To cross your pastoral mood, sir page,  
With the crook of the battle-bow:  
But a knight may speak of a lady's face,  
I ween, in any mood or place,  
If the grasses die or grow.

## IX

'And this I meant to say,—  
My lady's face shall shine  
As ladies' faces use, to greet  
My page from Palestine;  
Or, speak she fair or prank she gay,  
She is no lady of mine.

## X

'And this I meant to fear,—  
Her bower may suit thee ill!  
For, sooth, in that same field and tent,  
Thy *talk* was somewhat still;  
And fitter thy hand for my knightly spear,  
Than thy tongue for my lady's will.'

## XI

Slowly and thankfully  
The young page bowed his head:  
His large eyes seemed to muse a smile,  
Until he blushed instead,  
And no lady in her bower, pardiè,  
Could blush more sudden red.  
'Sir Knight,—thy lady's bower to me  
Is suited well,' he said.

## XII

*Beati, beati, mortui!*

From the convent on the sea,  
One mile off, or scarce as nigh,  
Swells the dirge as clear and high  
As if that, over brake and lea,  
Bodily the wind did carry  
The great altar of Saint Mary,  
And the fifty tapers burning o'er it,  
And the lady Abbess dead before it,  
And the chanting nuns whom yester-  
week

Her voice did charge and bless,—  
Chanting steady, chanting meek,  
Chanting with a solemn breath  
Because that they are thinking less  
Upon the Dead than upon death!

*Beati, beati, mortui!*

Now the vision in the sound  
Wheeleth on the wind around.  
Now it sleepeth back, away—  
The uplands will not let it stay  
To dark the western sun.

*Mortui!*—away at last,—

Or ere the page's blush is past!  
And the knight heard all, and the page  
heard none.

## XIII

'A boon, thou noble knight,  
If ever I servèd thee!  
Though thou art a knight and I am a page,  
Now grant a boon to me;  
And tell me sooth, if dark or bright,  
If little loved or loved aright  
Be the face of thy ladye.'

## XIV

Gloomily looked the knight;—  
'As a son thou hast servèd me,  
And would to none I had granted boon  
Except to only thee!  
For haply then I should love aright,  
For then I should know if dark or bright  
Were the face of my ladye.

## XV

'Yet ill it suits my knightly tongue  
To grudge that granted boon!  
That heavy price from heart and life  
I paid in silence down.  
The hand that claimed it, cleared in fine  
My father's fame: I swear by mine,  
That price was nobly won.

## XVI

'Earl Walter was a brave old earl,—  
He was my father's friend;  
And while I rode the lists at court  
And little guessed the end,  
My noble father in his shroud,  
Against a slanderer lying loud,  
He rose up to defend.

## XVII

'Oh, calm, below the marble grey  
My father's dust was strown!  
Oh, meek, above the marble grey  
His image prayed alone!  
The slanderer lied—the wretch was  
brave,—  
For, looking up the minster-nave,  
He saw my father's knightly glaive  
Was changed from steel to stone.

## XVIII

'Earl Walter's glaive was steel,  
With a brave old hand to wear it,  
And dashed the lie back in the mouth  
Which lied against the godly truth  
And against the knightly merit!

The slanderer, 'neath the avenger's heel,  
Struck up the dagger in appeal  
From stealthy lie to brutal force—  
And out upon the traitor's corse  
Was yielded the true spirit.

## XIX

'I would mine hand had fought that fight  
And justified my father!  
I would mine heart had caught that wound  
And slept beside him rather!  
I think it were a better thing  
Than murdered friend and marriage-ring  
Forced on my life together.

## XX

'Wail shook Earl Walter's house;  
His true wife shed no tear;  
She lay upon her bed as mute  
As the earl did on his bier:  
Till—"Ride, ride fast," she said at last,  
"And bring the avengèd's son anear!  
Ride fast—ride free, as a dart can flee,  
For white of blee with waiting for me  
Is the corse in the next chambère."

## XXI

'I came—I knelt beside her bed—  
Her calm was worse than strife;  
"My husband, for thy father dear,  
Gave freely, when thou wert not here,  
His own and eke my life.  
A boon! Of that sweet child we make  
An orphan for thy father's sake,  
Make thou, for ours, a wife."

## XXII

'I said, "My steed neighs in the court,  
My bark rocks on the brine,  
And the warrior's vow I am under now  
To free the pilgrim's shrine;  
But fetch the ring and fetch the priest  
And call that daughter of thine,  
And rule she wide from my castle on Nyde  
While I am in Palestine."

## XXIII

'In the dark chambère, if the bride was  
fair,  
Ye wis, I could not see,  
But the steed thrice neighed, and the  
priest fast prayed,  
And wedded fast were we.

Her mother smiled upon her bed  
As at its side we knelt to wed,  
And the bride rose from her knee  
And kissed the smile of her mother dead,  
Or ever she kissed me.

## XXIV

'My page, my page, what grieves thee so,  
That the tears run down thy face?'—  
'Alas, alas! mine own sister  
Was in thy lady's case!  
But *she* laid down the silks she wore  
And followed him she wed before,  
Disguised as his true servitor,  
To the very battle-place.'

## XXV

And wept the page, but laughed the  
knight,—  
A careless laugh laughed he:  
'Well done it were for thy sister,  
But not for my ladye!  
My love, so please you, shall requite  
No woman, whether dark or bright,  
Unwomaned if she be.'

## XXVI

The page stopped weeping and smiled  
cold—  
'Your wisdom may declare  
That womanhood is proved the best  
By golden brooch and glossy vest  
The mincing ladies wear;  
Yet is it proved, and was of old,  
Anear as well, I dare to hold,  
By truth, or by despair.'

## XXVII

He smiled no more, he wept no more,  
But passionate he spake,—  
'Oh, womanly she prayed in tent,  
When none beside did wake!  
Oh, womanly she paled in fight,  
For one beloved's sake!—  
And her little hand defiled with blood,  
Her tender tears of womanhood  
Most woman-pure did make!'

## XXVIII

—'Well done it were for thy sister,  
Thou tellest well her tale!  
But for my lady, she shall pray  
I' the kirk of Nydesdale.

Not dread for me but love for me  
 Shall make my lady pale;  
 No casque shall hide her woman's tear—  
 It shall have room to trickle clear  
 Behind her woman's veil.'

## xxxix

—'But what if she mistook thy mind  
 And followed thee to strife,  
 Then kneeling, did entreat thy love,  
 As Paynims ask for life?'  
 —'I would forgive, and evermore  
 Would love her as my servitor,  
 But little as my wife.

## xxx

'Look up—there is a small bright cloud  
 Alone amid the skies!  
 So high, so pure, and so apart,  
 A woman's honour lies.'  
 The page looked up—the cloud was  
 sheen—  
 A sadder cloud did rush, I ween,  
 Betwixt it and his eyes:

## xxxii

Then dimly dropped his eyes away  
 From welkin unto hill—  
 Ha! who rides there?—the page is 'ware,  
 Though the cry at his heart is still!  
 And the page seeth all and the knight  
 seeth none,  
 Though banner and spear do fleck the  
 sun,  
 And the Saracens ride at will.

## xxxiii

He speaketh calm, he speaketh low,—  
 'Ride fast, my master, ride,  
 Or ere within the broadening dark  
 The narrow shadows hide.'  
 'Yea, fast, my page, I will do so,  
 And keep thou at my side.'

## xxxiiii

'Now nay, now nay, ride on thy way,  
 Thy faithful page precede,  
 For I must loose on saddle-bow  
 My battle-casque that galls, I trow,  
 The shoulder of my steed;  
 And I must pray, as I did vow,  
 For one in bitter need.

## xxxiv

'Ere night I shall be near to thee,—  
 Now ride, my master, ride!  
 Ere night, as parted spirits cleave  
 To mortals too beloved to leave,  
 I shall be at thy side.'  
 The knight smiled free at the fantasy,  
 And adown the dell did ride.

## xxxv

Had the knight looked up to the page's  
 face,  
 No smile the word had won:  
 Had the knight looked up to the page's  
 face,  
 I ween he had never gone:  
 Had the knight looked back to the page's  
 geste,  
 I ween he had turned anon!  
 For dread was the woe in the face so  
 young,  
 And wild was the silent geste that flung  
 Casque, sword to earth—as the boy down-  
 sprung,  
 And stood—alone, alone.

## xxxvi

He clenched his hands as if to hold  
 His soul's great agony—  
 'Have I renounced my womanhood,  
 For wifehood unto thee,  
 And is this the last, last look of thine  
 That ever I shall see?

## xxxvii

'Yet God thee save, and mayst thou have  
 A lady to thy mind,  
 More woman-proud and half as true  
 As one thou leav'st behind!  
 And God me take with Him to dwell—  
 For Him I cannot love too well,  
 As I have loved my kind.'

## xxxviii

She looketh up, in earth's despair,  
 The hopeful heavens to seek:  
 That little cloud still floateth there,  
 Whereof her loved did speak.  
 How bright the little cloud appears!  
 Her eyelids fall upon the tears,  
 And the tears down either cheek.

## XXXIX

The tramp of hoof, the flash of steel—  
The Paynims round her coming!  
The sound and sight have made her  
calm,—

False page, but truthful woman!  
She stands amid them all unmoved:  
A heart once broken by the loved  
Is strong to meet the foeman.

## XL

‘Ho, Christian page! art keeping sheep,  
From pouring wine-cups resting?’—  
‘I keep my master’s noble name,  
For warring, not for feasting;  
And if that here Sir Hubert were,  
My master brave, my master dear,  
Ye would not stay to question.’

## XLI

‘Where is thy master, scornful page,  
That we may slay or bind him?’—  
‘Now search thelea and search the wood,  
And see if ye can find him!  
Nathless, as hath been often tried,  
Your Paynim heroes faster ride  
Before him than behind him.’

## XLII

‘Give smoother answers, lying page,  
Or perish in the lying.’—  
‘I trow that if the warrior brand  
Beside my foot, were in my hand,  
‘Twere better at replying.’  
They cursed her deep, they smote her low,  
They cleft her golden ringlets through;  
The Loving is the Dying.

## XLIII

She felt the scimitar gleam down,  
And met it from beneath  
With smile more bright in victory  
Than any sword from sheath,—  
Which flashed across her lip serene,  
Most like the spirit-light between  
The darks of life and death.

## XLIV

*Ingemisco, ingemisco!*  
From the convent on the sea,  
Now it sweepeth solemnly!  
As over wood and over lea

Bodily the wind did carry  
The great altar of Saint Mary,  
And the fifty tapers paling o’er it,  
And the Lady Abbess stark before it,  
And the weary nuns with hearts that  
faintly

Beat along their voices saintly—

*Ingemisco, ingemisco!*  
Dirge for abbess laid in shroud  
Sweepeth o’er the shroudless dead,  
Page or lady, as we said,  
With the dew upon her head,  
All as sad if not as loud.

*Ingemisco, ingemisco!*  
Is ever a lament begun  
By any mourner under sun,  
Which, ere it endeth, suits but *one*?

THE LAY OF THE BROWN  
ROSARY

## FIRST PART

‘ONORA, ONORA,’—her mother is calling,  
She sits at the lattice and hears the dew  
falling  
Drop after drop from the sycamores  
laden  
With dew as with blossom, and calls  
home the maiden,  
‘Night cometh, Onora.’

She looks down the garden-walk caver-  
ned with trees,  
To the limes at the end where the green  
arbour is—  
‘Some sweet thought or other may keep  
where it found her,  
While forgot or unseen in the dreamlight  
around her  
Night cometh—Onora!’

She looks up the forest whose alleys  
shoot on  
Like the mute minster-aisles when the  
‘anthem is done,  
And the choristers sitting with faces  
aslant  
Feel the silence to consecrate more than  
the chant—  
‘Onora, Onora!’

And forward she looketh across the  
brown heath—

‘Onora, art coming?’—what is it she  
seeth?

Nought, nought, but the grey border-  
stone that is wist

To dilate and assume a wild shape in  
the mist—

‘My daughter!’—Then over

The casement she leaneth, and as she  
doth so,

She is ‘ware of her little son playing  
below :

‘Now where is Onora?’—He hung  
down his head

And spake not, then answering blushed  
scarlet-red,—

‘At the tryst with her lover.’

But his mother was wroth. In a stern-  
ness quoth she,

‘As thou play’st at the ball, art thou  
playing with me?

When we know that her lover to battle  
is gone,

And the saints know above that she  
loveth but one

And will ne’er wed another?’

Then the boy wept aloud. ‘Twas a fair  
sight yet sad

To see the tears run down the sweet  
blossoms he had :

He stamped with his foot, said—‘The  
saints know I lied

Because truth that is wicked is fittest to  
hide!

Must I utter it, mother?’

In his vehement childhood he hurried  
within,

And knelt at her feet as in prayer  
against sin ;

But a child at a prayer never sobbeth as  
he—

‘Oh! she sits with the nun of the brown  
rosary,

At nights in the ruin!

‘The old convent ruin the ivy rots off,  
Where the owl hoots by day, and the  
toad is sun-proof ;

Where no singing-birds build, and the  
trees gaunt and grey

As in stormy sea-coasts appear blasted  
one way—

But is *this* the wind’s doing?

‘A nun in the east wall was buried alive,  
Who mocked at the priest when he  
called her to shrive,—

And shrieked such a curse, as the stone  
took her breath,

The old abbess fell backward and  
swooned unto death

With an Ave half-spoken.

‘I tried once to pass it, myself and my  
hound,

Till, as fearing the lash, down he  
shivered to ground.

A brave hound, my mother! a brave  
hound, ye wot!

And the wolf thought the same with his  
fangs at her throat

In the pass of the Brocken.

‘At dawn and at eve, mother, who  
sitteth there,

With the brown rosary never used for  
a prayer?

Stoop low, mother, low! If we went  
there to see,

What an ugly great hole in that east wall  
must be

At dawn and at even!

‘Who meet there, my mother, at dawn  
and at even?

Who meet by that wall, never looking  
to heaven?

O sweetest my sister, what doeth with  
*thee*,

The ghost of a nun with a brown rosary  
And a face turned from heaven?

‘Saint Agnes o’erwatcheth my dreams,  
and erewhile

I have felt through mine eyelids the  
warmth of her smile;

But last night, as a sadness like pity  
came o’er her,

She whispered—“Say *two* prayers at  
dawn for Onora!

The Tempted is sinning.”

'Onora, Onora!' they heard her not coming—

Not a step on the grass, not a voice through the gloaming;

But her mother looked up, and she stood on the floor

Fair and still as the moonlight that came there before,

And a smile just beginning.

It touches her lips—but it dares not arise

To the height of the mystical sphere of her eyes;

And the large musing eyes, neither joyous nor sorry,

Sing on like the angels in separate glory Between clouds of amber.

For the hair droops in clouds amber-coloured, till stirred

Into gold by the gesture that comes with a word;

While—O soft!—her speaking is so interwound

Of the dim and the sweet, 'tis a twilight of sound

And floats through the chamber.

'Since thou shrivest my brother, fair mother,' said she,

'I count on thy priesthood for marrying of me;

And I know by the hills that the battle is done—

That my lover rides on—will be here with the sun,

'Neath the eyes that behold thee.

Her mother sate silent—too tender, I wis,

Of the smile her dead father smiled dying to kiss;

But the boy started up pale with tears, passion-wrought,—

'O wicked fair sister, the hills utter nought!

If he cometh, who told thee?'

'I know by the hills,' she resumed, calm and clear,

'By the beauty upon them, that HE is anear:

Did they ever look so since he bade me adieu?

Oh, love in the waking, sweet brother, is true

As Saint Agnes in sleeping.'

Half-ashamed and half-softened the boy did not speak,

And the blush met the lashes which fell on his cheek:

She bowed down to kiss him—dear saints, did he see

Or feel on her bosom the BROWN ROSARY, That he shrank away weeping?

## SECOND PART

*A bed.—ONORA sleeping. Angels, but not near.*

*First Angel.*

Must we stand so far, and she So very fair?

*Second Angel.* As bodies be.

*First Angel.*

And she so mild?

*Second Angel.* As spirits when They meek, not to God, but men.

*First Angel.*

And she so young,—that I who bring Good dreams for saintly children,

might

Mistake that small soft face to-night, And fetch her such a blessed thing,

That at her waking she would weep For childhood lost anew in sleep.

How hath she sinned?

*Second Angel.* In bartering love; God's love—for man's.

*First Angel.* We may reprove

The world for this, not only her.

Let me approach to breathe away

This dust o' the heart with holy air.

*Second Angel.*

Stand off! She sleeps, and did not pray.

*First Angel.*

Did none pray for her?

*Second Angel.* Aye, a child,—

Who never, praying, wept before:

While, in a mother undefiled

Prayer goeth on in sleep, as true

And pauseless as the pulses do.

*First Angel.*

Then I approach.

*Second Angel.*

It is not WILLED.

*First Angel.*

One word: is she redeemed?

*Second Angel.*

No more!

The place is filled. [*Angels vanish.*]

*Evil Spirit in a Nun's garb by the bed.*

Forbear that dream—forebear that dream!  
too near to Heaven it leaned.

*Onora in sleep.*

Nay, leave me this—but only this! 'tis  
but a dream, sweet fiend!

*Evil Spirit.*

It is a thought.

*Onora in sleep.*

A sleeping thought—most innocent of  
good.

It doth the Devil no harm, sweet fiend!  
it cannot, if it would.

I say in it no holy hymn, I do no holy work,  
I scarcely hear the sabbath-bell that  
chimeth from the kirk.

*Evil Spirit.*

Forbear that dream—forebear that dream!

*Onora in sleep.*

Nay, let me dream at least.  
That far-off bell, it may be took for viol  
at a feast.

I only walk among the fields, beneath  
the autumn-sun,

With my dead father, hand in hand, as  
I have often done.

*Evil Spirit.*

Forbear that dream—forebear that dream!

*Onora in sleep.*

Nay, sweet fiend, let me go.  
I never more can walk with him, oh,  
never more but so.

For they have tied my father's feet  
beneath the kirkyard stone,

Oh, deep and straight, oh, very straight!  
they move at nights alone:

And then he calleth through my dreams,  
he calleth tenderly,

'Come forth, my daughter, my beloved,  
and walk the fields with me!'

*Evil Spirit.*

Forbear that dream, or else disprove its  
pureness by a sign.

*Onora in sleep.*

Speak on, thou shalt be satisfied! my  
word shall answer thine.

I heard a bird which used to sing  
when I a child was praying,

I see the poppies in the corn I used to  
sport away in.—

What shall I do—tread down the  
dew, and pull the blossoms blowing?

Or clap my wicked hands to fright the  
finches from the rowan?

*Evil Spirit.*

Thou shalt do something harder still.

Stand up where thou dost stand  
Among the fields of Dreamland with thy  
father hand in hand,

And clear and slow, repeat the vow—  
declare its cause and kind,

Which, not to break, in sleep or wake,  
thou bearest on thy mind.

*Onora in sleep.*

I bear a vow of sinful kind, a vow for  
mournful cause:

I vowed it deep, I vowed it strong—the  
spirits laughed applause:

The spirits trailed along the pines low  
laughter like a breeze,

While, high between their swinging tops,  
the stars appeared to freeze.

*Evil Spirit.*

More calm and free,—speak out to me,  
why such a vow was made.

*Onora in sleep.*

Because that God decreed my death,  
and I shrank back afraid.

Have patience, O dead father mine!  
I did not fear to die;—

I wish I were a young dead child, and  
had thy company!

I wish I lay beside thy feet, a buried  
three-year child,

And wearing only a kiss of thine upon  
my lips that smiled!

The linden-tree that covers thee might  
so have shadowed twain,

For death itself I did not fear—'tis love  
that makes the pain.

Love feareth death. I was no child—  
I was betrothed that day;

I wore a troth-kiss on my lips I could  
not give away.

How could I bear to lie content and still  
beneath a stone,

And feel mine own betrothed go by—  
alas! no more mine own,—

Go leading by in wedding pomp some  
lovely lady brave,

With cheeks that blushed as red as rose,  
while mine were white in grave?

How could I bear to sit in Heaven, on  
e'er so high a throne,

And hear him say to her—to *her!* that  
else he loveth none?

Though e'er so high I sate above, though  
e'er so low he spake,

As clear as thunder I should hear the  
new oath he might take,

That hers, forsooth, were heavenly  
eyes—ah, me! while very dim

Some heavenly eyes (indeed of Heaven!)  
would darken down to *him*.

*Evil Spirit.*

Who told thee thou wast called to death?

*Onora in sleep.*

I sate all night beside thee—  
The grey owl on the ruined wall shut  
both his eyes to hide thee,

And ever he flapped his heavy wing all  
brokenly and weak,

And the long grass waved against the  
sky, around his gasping beak.

I sate beside thee all the night, while  
the moonlight lay forlorn,

Strewn round us like a dead world's  
shroud, in ghastly fragments torn.

And through the night, and through  
the hush, and over the flapping  
wing,

We heard beside the Heavenly Gate the  
angels murmuring :—

We heard them say, 'Put day to day,  
and count the days to seven,

And God will draw Onora up the  
golden stairs of Heaven;

And yet the Evil ones have leave that  
purpose to defer,

For if she has no need of *HIM*, He has  
no need of her.'—

*Evil Spirit.*

Speak out to me, speak bold and free.

*Onora in sleep.*

And then I heard thee say,  
'I count upon my rosary brown the  
hours thou hast to stay!

Yet God permits us Evil ones to put by  
that decree,

Since if thou hast no need of *HIM*, He  
has no need of thee—

And if thou wilt forgo the sight of  
angels, verily

Thy true love gazing on thy face, shall  
guess what angels be;

Nor bride shall pass, save thee' . . .  
Alas!—my father's hand's acold,

The meadows seem—

*Evil Spirit.*

Forbear the dream, or let the  
vow be told!

*Onora in sleep.*

I vowed upon thy rosary brown, this  
string of antique beads,

By charnel lichens overgrown, and dank  
among the weeds,

This rosary brown, which is thine own,—  
lost soul of buried nun,

Who, lost by vow, wouldst render now  
all souls alike undone,—

I vowed upon thy rosary brown,—and,  
till such vow should break,

A pledge always of living days, 'twas  
hung around my neck—

I vowed to thee on rosary (dead father,  
look not so!),

*I would not thank God in my weal, nor  
seek God in my woe.*

*Evil Spirit.*

And canst thou prove—

*Onora in sleep.*

O love—my love!

I felt him near again!

I saw his steed on mountain-head, I  
heard it on the plain!

Was this no weal for me to feel!—is  
greater weal than this?

Yet when he came, I wept his name—  
and the angels heard but *his*.

*Evil Spirit.*

Well done, well done!

*Onora in sleep.*

Aye me! the sun . . . the dreamlight 'gins  
to pine,—

Aye me! how dread can look the Dead!—  
Aroint thee, father mine!

She starteth from slumber, she sitteth  
upright,

And her breath comes in sobs while she  
stares through the night.

There is nought. The great willow, her  
lattice before,

Large-drawn in the moon, lieth calm on the floor.

But her hands tremble fast as their pulses, and, free

From the death-clasp, close over—the BROWN ROSARY.

### THIRD PART

'Tis a morn for a bridal; the merry bride-bell

Rings clear through the green-wood that skirts the chapelle,

And the priest at the altar awaiteth the bride,

And the sacristans slyly are jesting aside  
At the work shall be doing;

While down through the wood rides that fair company,

The youths with the courtship, the maids with the glee,

Till the chapel-cross opens to sight, and at once

All the maids sigh demurely and think for the nonce,

'And so endeth a wooing!'

And the bride and the bridegroom are leading the way,

With his hand on her rein, and a word yet to say:

Her dropt eyelids suggest the soft answers beneath,

And the little quick smiles come and go with her breath,

When she sigheth or speaketh.

And the tender bride-mother breaks off unaware

From an Ave, to think that her daughter is fair,

Till in nearing the chapel and glancing before

She seeth her little son stand at the door:

Is it play that he seeketh?

Is it play? when his eyes wander innocent-wild,

And sublimed with a sadness unfitting a child?

He trembles not, weeps not—the passion is done,

And calmly he kneels in their midst, with the sun

On his head like a glory.

'O fair-featured maids, ye are many!' he cried,—

'But, in fairness and vileness, who matcheth the bride?

O brave-hearted youths, ye are many! but whom,

For the courage and woe, can ye match with the groom,

As ye see them before ye?'

Out spake the bride's mother, 'The vileness is thine,

If thou shame thine own sister, a bride at the shrine!'

Out spake the bride's lover, 'The vileness be mine,

If he shame mine own wife at the hearth or the shrine,

And the charge be unprovèd.

'Bring the charge, prove the charge, brother! speak it aloud:

Let thy father and hers, hear it deep in his shroud!'

—'O father, thou seest—for dead eyes can see—

How she wears on her bosom a *brown rosary*,

O my father beloved!'

Then outlaughed the bridegroom, and outlaughed withal

Both maidens and youths, by the old chapel-wall.

'So she weareth no love-gift, kind brother,' quoth he,

'She may wear an she listeth a *brown rosary*,

Like a pure-hearted lady.'

Then swept through the chapel the long bridal train.

Though he spake to the bride she replied not again:

On, as one in a dream, pale and stately she went

Where the altar-lights burn o'er the great sacrament,

Faint with daylight, but steady.

But her brother had passed in between  
 them and her,  
 And calmly knelt down on the high-altar  
 stair—  
 Of an infantine aspect so stern to the  
 view  
 That the priest could not smile on the  
 child's eyes of blue  
 As he would for another.

He knelt like a child marble-sculptured  
 and white,  
 That seems kneeling to pray on the tomb  
 of a knight,  
 With a look taken up to each iris of stone  
 From the greatness and death where he  
 kneeleth, but none  
 From the face of a mother.

'In your chapel, O priest, ye have  
 wedded and shriven  
 Fair wives for the hearth, and fair  
 sinners for Heaven!  
 But this fairest my sister, ye think now  
 to wed,  
 Bid her kneel where she standeth, and  
 shrive her instead:  
 O shrive her and wed not!'

In tears, the bride's mother,—'Sir priest,  
 unto thee .  
 Would he lie, as he lied to this fair  
 company.'  
 In wrath, the bride's lover,—'The lie  
 shall be clear!  
 Speak it out, boy! the saints in their  
 niches shall hear:  
 Be the charge proved or said not.'

Then serene in his childhood he lifted  
 his face,  
 And his voice sounded holy and fit for  
 the place:  
 'Look down from your niches, ye still  
 saints, and see  
 How she wears on her bosom a *brown*  
*rosary!*  
 Is it used for the praying!'

The youths looked aside—to laugh there  
 were a sin—  
 And the maidens' lips trembled from  
 smiles shut within.

Quoth the priest, 'Thou art wild, pretty  
 boy! Blessed she  
 Who prefers at her bridal a brown rosary  
 To a worldly arraying!'

The bridegroom spake low and led  
 onward the bride,  
 And before the high altar they stood  
 side by side:  
 The rite-book is opened, the rite is begun,  
 They have knelt down together to rise  
 up as one.  
 Who laughed by the altar?

The maidens looked forward, the youths  
 looked around,  
 The bridegroom's eye flashed from his  
 prayer at the sound;  
 And each saw the bride, as if no bride  
 she were,  
 Gazing cold at the priest without gesture  
 of prayer,  
 As he read from the psalter.

The priest never knew that she did so,  
 but still  
 He felt a power on him too strong for  
 his will,  
 And whenever the Great Name was  
 there to be read,  
 His voice sank to silence—THAT could  
 not be said,  
 Or the air could not hold it.

'I have sinnèd,' quoth he, 'I have  
 sinnèd, I wot'—  
 And the tears ran adown his old cheeks  
 at the thought.  
 They dropped fast on the book, but he  
 read on the same,  
 And ay was the silence where should  
 be the NAME,—  
 As the choristers told it.

The rite-book is closed, and the rite  
 being done  
 They who knelt down together arise  
 up as one.  
 Fair riseth the bride—oh, a fair bride  
 is she,—  
 But, for all (think the maidens) that  
 brown rosary,  
 No saint at her praying!

What aileth the bridegroom? He glares  
blank and wide—

Then suddenly turning he kisseth the  
bride—

His lip stung her with cold; she glanced  
upwardly mute:

'Mine own wife,' he said, and fell stark  
at her foot

In the word he was saying.

They have lifted him up,—but his head  
sinks away,

And his face showeth bleak in the  
sunshine and grey.

Leave him now where he lieth—for oh,  
never more

Will he kneel at an altar or stand on a  
floor!

Let his bride gaze upon him.

Long and still was her gaze, while they  
chafed him there

And breathed in the mouth whose last  
life had kissed her,

But when they stood up—only *they!*  
with a start

The shriek from her soul struck her  
pale lips apart—

She has lived, and forgone him!

And low on his body she droppeth  
adown—

'Didst call me thine own wife, beloved—  
thine own?

Then take thine own with thee! thy  
coldness is warm

To the world's cold without thee! Come,  
keep me from harm

In a calm of thy teaching.'

She looked in his face earnest-long, as  
in sooth

There were hope of an answer,—and  
then kissed his mouth,

And with head on his bosom, wept,  
wept bitterly,—

'Now, O God, take pity—take pity on  
me!—

God, hear my beseeching!'

She was 'ware of a shadow that crossed  
where she lay,

She was 'ware of a presence that withered  
the day—

Wild she sprang to her feet,—'I sur-  
render to *thee*

The broken vow's pledge,—the accursed  
rosary,—

I am ready for dying!'

She dashed it in scorn to the marble-  
paved ground

Where it fell mute as snow, and a weird  
music-sound

Crept up, like a chill, up the aisles long  
and dim,—

As the fiends tried to mock at the  
choristers' hymn

And moaned in the trying.

#### FOURTH PART

ONORA looketh listlessly adown the  
garden walk:

'I am weary, O my mother, of thy  
tender talk;

I am weary of the trees a-waving to and  
fro,

Of the steadfast skies above, the running  
brooks below.

All things are the same but I,—only I  
am dreary,

And, mother, of my dreariness behold  
me very weary.

'Mother, brother, pull the flowers I  
planted in the spring

And smiled to think I should smile more  
upon their gathering:

The bees will find out other flowers—  
oh, pull them, dearest mine,

And carry them and carry me before  
Saint Agnes' shrine.'

—Whereat they pulled the summer  
flowers she planted in the spring,

And her and them all mournfully to  
Agnes' shrine did bring.

She looked up to the pictured saint and  
gently shook her head—

'The picture is too calm for *me*—too  
calm for *me*,' she said:

'The little flowers we brought with us,  
before it we may lay,

For those are used to look at heaven,—  
but I must turn away,

Because no sinner under sun can dare  
 or bear to gaze  
 On God's or angel's holiness, except in  
 Jesu's face.'

She spoke with passion after pause—  
 'And were it wisely done,  
 If we who cannot gaze above, should  
 walk the earth alone?

If we whose virtue is so weak, should  
 have a will so strong,  
 And stand blind on the rocks, to choose  
 the right path from the wrong?

To choose perhaps a love-lit hearth,  
 instead of love and Heaven,—  
 A single rose, for a rose-tree, which  
 beareth seven times seven?

A rose that droppeth from the hand,  
 that fadeth in the breast,—

Until, in grieving for the worst, we  
 learn what is the best!

Then breaking into tears,—'Dear God,'  
 she cried, 'and must we see

All blissful things depart from us, or ere  
 we go to THEE!

We cannot guess Thee in the wood, or  
 hear Thee in the wind?

Our cedars must fall round us, ere we  
 see the light behind?

Aye sooth, we feel too strong in weal,  
 to need Thee on that road,

But woe being come, the soul is dumb  
 that crieth not on "God."

Her mother could not speak for tears;  
 she ever musèd thus,

'The bees will find out other flowers,—  
 but what is left for us?'

But her young brother stayed his sobs  
 and knelt beside her knee,

—'Thou sweetest sister in the world,  
 hast never a word for me?'

She passed her hand across his face,  
 she pressed it on his cheek,

So tenderly, so tenderly—she needed  
 not to speak.

The wreath which lay on shrine that day,  
 at vespers bloomed no more:

The woman fair who placed it there had  
 died an hour before.

Both perished mute, for lack of root,  
 earth's nourishment to reach.  
 O reader, breathe (the ballad saith)  
 some sweetness out of each!

## A ROMANCE OF THE GANGES

### I

SEVEN maidens 'neath the midnight  
 Stand near the river-sea.  
 Whose water sweepeth white around  
 The shadow of the tree.  
 The moon and earth are face to face,  
 And earth is slumbering deep;  
 The wave-voice seems the voice of dreams  
 That wander through her sleep.  
 The river floweth on.

### II

What bring they 'neath the midnight,  
 Beside the river-sea?  
 They bring the human heart wherein  
 No nightly calm can be,—  
 That droppeth never with the wind,  
 Nor drieth with the dew:  
 Oh, calm it, God! Thy calm is broad  
 To cover spirits, too.  
 The river floweth on.

### III

The maidens lean them over  
 The waters, side by side,  
 And shun each other's deepening eyes.  
 And gaze adown the tide;  
 For each within a little boat  
 A little lamp hath put,  
 And heaped for freight some lily's weight  
 Or scarlet rose half shut.  
 The river floweth on.

### IV

Of shell of coco carven,  
 Each little boat is made:  
 Each carries a lamp, and carries a flower,  
 And carries a hope unsaid;  
 And when the boat hath carried the lamp  
 Unquenched, till out of sight,  
 The maiden is sure that love will en-  
 dure,—  
 But love will fail with light.  
 The river floweth on.

## V

Why, all the stars are ready  
 To symbolize the soul,  
 The stars untroubled by the wind,  
 Unwearied as they roll;  
 And yet the soul by instinct sad  
 Reverts to symbols low—  
 To that small flame, whose very name  
 Breathed o'er it, shakes it so!  
 The river floweth on.

## VI

Six boats are on the river,  
 Seven maidens on the shore,  
 While still above them steadfastly  
 The stars shine evermore.  
 Go, little boats, go soft and safe,  
 And guard the symbol spark!—  
 The boats aright go safe and bright  
 Across the waters dark.  
 The river floweth on.

## VII

The maiden Luti watcheth  
 Where onwardly they float:  
 That look in her dilating eyes  
 Might seem to drive her boat!  
 Her eyes still mark the constant fire,  
 And kindling unawares  
 That hopeful while, she lets a smile  
 Creep silent through her prayers.  
 The river floweth on.

## VIII

The smile—where hath it wandered?  
 She riseth from her knee,  
 She holds her dark, wet locks away—  
 There is no light to see!  
 She cries a quick and bitter cry—  
 'Nuleeni, launch me thine!  
 We must have light abroad to-night,  
 For all the wreck of mine.'  
 The river floweth on.

## IX

'I do remember watching  
 Beside this river-bed,  
 When on my childish knee was laid  
 My dying father's head;  
 I turned mine own, to keep the tears  
 From falling on his face:  
 What doth it prove when Death and Love  
 Choose out the self-same place?'  
 The river floweth on.

## X

'They say the dead are joyful  
 The death-change here receiving:  
 Who say—ah, me!—who dare to say  
 Where joy comes to the living?  
 Thy boat, Nuleeni! look not sad—  
 Light up the waters rather!  
 I weep no faithless lover where  
 I wept a loving father.'  
 The river floweth on.

## XI

'My heart foretold his falsehood  
 Ere my little boat grew dim:  
 And though I closed mine eyes to dream  
 That one last dream of him,  
 They shall not now be wet to see  
 The shining vision go:  
 From earth's cold love I look above  
 To the holy house of snow<sup>1</sup>.  
 The river floweth on.

## XII

'Come thou—thou never knewest  
 A grief, that thou shouldst fear one!  
 Thou wearest still the happy look  
 That shines beneath a dear one;  
 Thy humming-bird is in the sun<sup>2</sup>,  
 Thy cuckoo in the grove,  
 And all the three broad worlds, for thee  
 Are full of wandering love.'  
 The river floweth on.

## XIII

'Why, maiden, dost thou loiter?  
 What secret wouldst thou cover?  
 That peepul cannot hide thy boat,  
 And I can guess thy lover.  
 I heard thee sob his name in sleep . .  
 It was a name I knew;  
 Come, little maid, be not afraid,  
 But let us prove him true!  
 The river floweth on.

<sup>1</sup> The Hindoo heaven is localized on the summit of Mount Meru—one of the mountains of Himalaya or Himmaleh, which signifies, I believe, in Sanscrit, the abode of snow, winter, or coldness.

<sup>2</sup> Himadeva, the Indian god of love, is imagined to wander through the three worlds, accompanied by the humming-bird, cuckoo, and gentle breezes.

## xiv

The little maiden cometh,  
 She cometh shy and slow,  
 I ween she seeth through her lids,  
 They drop adown so low;  
 Her tresses meet her small bare feet—  
 She stands and speaketh nought,  
 Yet blusheth red, as if she said  
 The name she only thought.

The river floweth on.

## xv

She knelt beside the water,  
 She lighted up the flame,  
 And o'er her youthful forehead's calm  
 The fitful radiance came:—  
 'Go, little boat, go, soft and safe,  
 And guard the symbol spark!'  
 Soft, safe, doth float the little boat  
 Across the waters dark.

The river floweth on.

## xvi

Glad tears her eyes have blinded,  
 The light they cannot reach;  
 She turneth with that sudden smile  
 She learnt before her speech—  
 'I do not hear his voice! the tears  
 Have dimmed my light away!  
 But the symbol light will last to-night,  
 The love will last for ay.'

The river floweth on.

## xvii

Then Luti spake behind her,  
 Outspake she bitterly,  
 'By the symbol light that lasts to-night,  
 Wilt vow a vow to me?'—  
 Nuleeni gazeth up her face,  
 Soft answer maketh she:  
 'By loves that last when lights are past,  
 I vow that vow to thee!'

The river floweth on.

## xviii

An earthly look had Luti  
 Though her voice was deep as prayer:  
 'The rice is gathered from the plains  
 To cast upon thine hair<sup>1</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> The casting of rice upon the head, and the fixing of the band or tali about the neck, are parts of the Hindoo marriage ceremonial.

But when *he* comes, his marriage-band  
 Around thy neck to throw,  
 Thy bride-smile raise to meet his gaze,  
 And whisper,—*There is one betrays,*  
*While Luti suffers woe.*

The river floweth on.

## xix

'And when in seasons after,  
 Thy little bright-faced son  
 Shall lean against thy knee and ask  
 What deeds his sire hath done,  
 Press deeper down thy mother-smile  
 His glossy curls among—  
 View deep his pretty childish eyes,  
 And whisper,—*There is none denies,*  
*While Luti speaks of wrong.*

The river floweth on.

## xx

Nuleeni looked in wonder,  
 Yet softly answered she:  
 'By loves that last when lights are past,  
 I vowed that vow to thee.  
 But why glads it thee that a bride-day be  
 By a word of *woe* defiled?  
 That a word of *wrong* take the cradle-song  
 From the ear of a sinless child?'—  
 'Why?' Luti said, and her laugh was  
 dread,  
 And her eyes dilated wild—  
 'That the fair new love may her bride-  
 groom prove,  
 And the father shame the child.'

The river floweth on.

## xxi

'Thou flowest still, O river,  
 Thou flowest 'neath the moon!  
 Thy lily hath not changed a leaf<sup>1</sup>,  
 Thy charmed lute a tune!  
*He* mixed his voice with thine—and *his*  
 Was all I heard around;  
 But now, beside his chosen bride,  
 I hear the river's sound.'

The river floweth on.

## xxii

'I gaze upon her beauty  
 Through the tresses that enwreath it;  
 The light above thy wave, is hers—  
 My rest, alone beneath it.

<sup>1</sup> The Ganges is represented as a white woman, with a water-lily in her right hand, and in her left a lute.

Oh, give me back the dying look  
 My father gave thy water!  
 Give back!—and let a little love  
 O'erwatch his weary daughter!'  
 The river floweth on.

## XXIII

'Give back!' she hath departed—  
 The word is wandering with her;  
 And the stricken maidens hear afar  
 The step and cry together.  
 Frail symbols? None are frail enow  
 For mortal joys to borrow!—  
 While bright doth float Nuleeni's boat,  
 She weepeth, dark with sorrow.  
 The river floweth on.

## RIME OF THE DUCHESS MAY

## I

To the belfry, one by one, went the  
 ringers from the sun,  
*Toll slowly.*  
 And the oldest ringer said, 'Ours is  
 music for the Dead,  
 When the rebecks are all done.'

## II

Six abeles i' the churchyard grow on the  
 northside in a row,  
*Toll slowly.*  
 And the shadows of their tops rock across  
 the little slopes  
 Of the grassy graves below.

## III

On the south side and the west, a small  
 river runs in haste,  
*Toll slowly.*  
 And between the river flowing and the  
 fair green trees a-growing  
 Do the dead lie at their rest.

## IV

On the east I sate that day, up against  
 a willow grey.  
*Toll slowly.*  
 Through the rain of willow-branches, I  
 could see the low hill-ranges,  
 And the river on its way.

## V

There I sate beneath the tree, and the  
 bell tolled solemnly,  
*Toll slowly.*  
 While the trees' and river's voices flowed  
 between the solemn noises,—  
 Yet death seemed more loud to me.

## VI

There, I read this ancient rime, while  
 the bell did all the time  
*Toll slowly.*  
 And the solemn knell fell in with the tale  
 of life and sin,  
 Like a rhythmic fate sublime.

## THE RIME

## I

Broad the forests stood (I read) on the  
 hills of Linteged—  
*Toll slowly.*  
 And three hundred years had stood mute  
 adown each hoary wood,  
 Like a full heart having prayed.

## II

And the little birds sang east, and the  
 little birds sang west,  
*Toll slowly.*  
 And but little thought was theirs of the  
 silent antique years,  
 In the building of their nest.

## III

Down the sun dropt large and red, on  
 the towers of Linteged,—  
*Toll slowly.*  
 Lance and spear upon the height,  
 bristling strange in fiery light,  
 While the castle stood in shade.

## IV

There, the castle stood up black, with  
 the red sun at its back,—  
*Toll slowly.*  
 Like a sullen smouldering pyre, with a  
 top that flickers fire  
 When the wind is on its track.

## v

And five hundred archers tall did besiege  
the castle wall,

*Toll slowly.*

And the castle, seethed in blood, fourteen  
days and nights had stood,  
And to-night was near its fall.

## vi

Yet thereunto, blind to doom, three  
months since, a bride did come,—

*Toll slowly.*

One who proudly trod the floors, and  
softly whispered in the doors,  
'May good angels bless our home.'

## vii

Oh, a bride of queenly eyes, with a front  
of constancies!

*Toll slowly.*

Oh, a bride of cordial mouth,—where the  
untired smile of youth  
Did light outward its own sighs.

## viii

'Twas a Duke's fair orphan-girl, and her  
uncle's ward, the Earl;

*Toll slowly.*

Who betrothed her twelve years old, for  
the sake of dowry gold,  
To his son Lord Leigh, the churl.

## ix

But what time she had made good all her  
years of womanhood,

*Toll slowly.*

Unto both those lords of Leigh, spake  
she out right sovrantly,  
'My will runneth as my blood.'

## x

And while this same blood makes red  
this same right hand's veins,' she  
said,—

*Toll slowly.*

'Tis my will as lady free, not to wed  
a lord of Leigh,  
But Sir Guy of Linteged.'

## xi

The old Earl he smiled smooth, then he  
sighed for wilful youth,—

*Toll slowly.*

'Good my niece, that hand withal looketh  
somewhat soft and small  
For so large a will, in sooth.'

## xii

She, too, smiled by that same sign,—but  
her smile was cold and fine,—

*Toll slowly.*

'Little hand clasps muckle gold, or it  
were not worth the hold  
Of thy son, good uncle mine!'

## xiii

Then the young lord jerked his breath,  
and sware thickly in his teeth,

*Toll slowly.*

'He would wed his own betrothed, an  
she loved him an she loathed,  
Let the life come or the death.'

## xiv

Up she rose with scornful eyes, as her  
father's child might rise,—

*Toll slowly.*

'Thy hound's blood, my lord of Leigh,  
stains thy knightly heel,' quoth  
she,  
'And he means not where he lies.'

## xv

'But a woman's will dies hard, in the  
hall or on the sward!'

*Toll slowly.*

'By that grave, my lords, which made me  
orphaned girl and dowered lady,  
I deny you wife and ward.'

## xvi

Unto each she bowed her head, and  
swept past with lofty tread.

*Toll slowly.*

Ere the midnight-bell had ceased, in the  
chapel had the priest  
Blessed her, bride of Linteged.

## xvii

Fast and fain the bridal train along the  
night-storm rode amain.

*Toll slowly.*

Hard the steeds of lord and serf struck  
their hoofs out on the turf,  
In the pauses of the rain.

## XVIII

Fast and fain the kinsmen's train along  
the storm pursued amain—

*Toll slowly.*

Steed on steed-track, dashing off—  
thickening, doubling, hoof on hoof,  
In the pauses of the rain.

## XIX

And the bridegroom led the flight on his  
red-roan steed of might,

*Toll slowly.*

And the bride lay on his arm, still, as if  
she feared no harm,  
Smiling out into the night.

## XX

'Dost thou fear?' he said at last.—'Nay,'  
she answered him in haste,—

*Toll slowly.*

'Not such death as we could find—only  
life with one behind—  
Ride on fast as fear—ride fast!'

## XXI

Up the mountain wheeled the steed—  
girth to ground, and fetlocks  
spread,—

*Toll slowly.*

Headlong bounds, and rocking flanks,—  
down he staggered, down the  
banks,  
To the towers of Linteged.

## XXII

High and low the serfs looked out, red  
the flambeaus tossed about,—

*Toll slowly.*

In the courtyard rose the cry—'Live the  
Duchess and Sir Guy!'  
But she never heard them shout.

## XXIII

On the steed she dropt her cheek, kissed  
his mane and kissed his neck.—

*Toll slowly.*

'I had happier died by thee, than lived  
on, a Lady Leigh,'  
Were the first words she did speak.

## XXIV

But a three months' joyaunce lay 'twixt  
that moment and to-day,  
*Toll slowly.*

When five hundred archers tall stand  
beside the castle wall,  
To recapture Duchess May.

## XXV

And the castle standeth black, with the  
red sun at its back,—

*Toll slowly.*

And a fortnight's siege is done—and,  
except the duchess, none  
Can misdoubt the coming wrack.

## XXVI

Then the captain, young Lord Leigh, with  
his eyes so grey of blee,

*Toll slowly.*

And thin lips that scarcely sheath the cold  
white gnashing of his teeth,  
Gnashed in smiling, absently,

## XXVII

Cried aloud, 'So goes the day, bridegroom  
fair of Duchess May!'

*Toll slowly.*

'Look thy last upon that sun! if thou  
seest to-morrow's one,  
'Twill be through a foot of clay.

## XXVIII

'Ha, fair bride! dost hear no sound, save  
that moaning of the hound?'

*Toll slowly.*

'Thou and I have parted troth,—yet  
I keep my vengeance-oath,  
And the other may come round.

## XXIX

'Ha! thy will is brave to dare, and thy  
new love past compare,—

*Toll slowly.*

'Yet thine old love's faulchion brave is  
as strong a thing to have  
As the will of lady fair.

## XXX

'Peck on blindly, netted dove!—If a  
wife's name thee behove,'

*Toll slowly.*

'Thou shalt wear the same to-morrow,  
ere the grave has hid the sorrow  
Of thy last ill-mated love.

XXXI

'O'er his fixed and silent mouth, thou  
and I will call back troth.'

*Toll slowly.*

'He shall altar be and priest,—and he  
will not cry at least  
"I forbid you—I am loath!"'

XXXII

'I will wring thy fingers pale in the  
gauntlet of my mail.'

*Toll slowly.*

"Little hand and muckle gold" close  
shall lie within my hold,  
As the sword did, to prevail.'

XXXIII

Oh, the little birds sang east, and the  
little birds sang west,

*Toll slowly.*

Oh, and laughed the Duchess May, and  
her soul did put away  
All his boasting, for a jest.

XXXIV

In her chamber did she sit, laughing low  
to think of it,—

*Toll slowly.*

'Tower is strong and will is free—thou  
canst boast, my lord of Leigh,  
But thou boastest little wit.'

XXXV

In her tire-glass gazed she, and she  
blushed right womanly.

*Toll slowly.*

She blushed half from her disdain—half,  
her beauty was so plain,  
—'Oath for oath, my lord of Leigh!'

XXXVI

Straight she called her maidens in—  
'Since ye gave me blame herein,'

*Toll slowly.*

'That a bridal such as mine should lack  
gauds to make it fine,  
Come and shrive me from that sin.'

XXXVII

'It is three months gone to-day since  
I gave mine hand away.'

*Toll slowly.*

'Bring the gold and bring the gem, we  
will keep bride-state in them  
While we keep the foe at bay.'

XXXVIII

'On your arms I loose mine hair!—comb  
it smooth and crown it fair.'

*Toll slowly.*

'I would look in purple pall from this  
lattice down the wall,  
And throw scorn to one that's  
there!'

XXXIX

Oh, the little birds sang east, and the  
little birds sang west.

*Toll slowly.*

On the tower the castle's lord leant in  
silence on his sword,  
With an anguish in his breast.

XL

With a spirit-laden weight, did he lean  
down passionate.

*Toll slowly.*

They have almost sapped the wall,—they  
will enter therewithal,  
With no knocking at the gate.

XLI

Then the sword he leant upon, shivered,  
snapped upon the stone,—

*Toll slowly.*

'Sword,' he thought, with inward laugh,  
'ill thou servest for a staff  
When thy nobler use is done!

XLII

'Sword, thy nobler use is done!—tower  
is lost, and shame begun!'

*Toll slowly.*

'If we met them in the breach, hilt to  
hilt or speech to speech,  
We should die there, each for one.'

XLIII

'If we met them at the wall, we should  
singly, vainly fall,'—

*Toll slowly.*

'But if I die here alone,—then I die,  
who am but one,  
And die nobly for them all.'

## XLIV

'Five true friends lie for my sake, in the  
moat and in the brake,'—

*Toll slowly.*

'Thirteen warriors lie at rest, with a  
black wound in the breast,  
And not one of these will wake.

## XLV

'So no more of this shall be!—heart-blood  
weighs too heavily,'—

*Toll slowly.*

'And I could not sleep in grave, with the  
faithful and the brave  
Heaped around and over me.

## XLVI

'Since young Clare a mother hath, and  
young Ralph a plighted faith,'—

*Toll slowly.*

'Since my pale young sister's cheeks  
blush like rose when Ronald  
speaks,  
Albeit never a word she saith—

## XLVII

'These shall never die for me—life-blood  
falls too heavily:'

*Toll slowly.*

'And if I die here apart,—o'er my dead  
and silent heart  
They shall pass out safe and free.

## XLVIII

'When the foe hath heard it said—  
"Death holds Guy of Linteged,"'

*Toll slowly.*

'That new corse new peace shall bring,  
and a blessed, blessed thing  
Shall the stone be at its head.

## XLIX

'Then my friends shall pass out free, and  
shall bear my memory,'—

*Toll slowly.*

'Then my foes shall sleek their pride,  
soothing fair my widowed bride,  
Whose sole sin was love of me.

## L

'With their words all smooth and sweet,  
they will front her and entreat,'

*Toll slowly.*

'And their purple pall will spread under-  
neath her fainting head  
While her tears drop over it.

## LI

'She will weep her woman's tears, she  
will pray her woman's prayers,'—

*Toll slowly.*

'But her heart is young in pain, and her  
hopes will spring again  
By the suntime of her years.

## LII

'Ah, sweet May! ah, sweetest grief!—  
once I vowed thee my belief,'

*Toll slowly.*

'That thy name expressed thy sweetness,  
—May of poets, in completeness!  
Now my May-day seemeth brief.'

## LIII

All these silent thoughts did swim o'er  
his eyes grown strange and dim,—

*Toll slowly.*

Till his true men in the place, wished  
they stood there face to face  
With the foe instead of him.

## LIV

'One last oath, my friends that wear  
faithful hearts to do and dare!'—

*Toll slowly.*

'Tower must fall, and bride be lost!—  
swear me service worth the cost!'  
—Bold they stood around to swear.

## LV

'Each man clasp my hand and swear, by  
the deed we failed in there,'

*Toll slowly.*

'Not for vengeance, not for right, will  
ye strike one blow to-night!'  
—Pale they stood around to swear

## LVI

'One last boon, young Ralph and Clare!  
faithful hearts to do and dare!'—

*Toll slowly.*

'Bring that steed up from his stall, which  
she kissed before you all!  
Guide him up the turret-stair.

## LVII

'Ye shall harness him aright, and lead  
upward to this height.'

*Toll slowly.*

'Once in love and twice in war hath he  
borne me strong and far :  
He shall bear me far to-night.'

## LVIII

Then his men looked to and fro, when  
they heard him speaking so.

*Toll slowly.*

—'Las! thenoble heart,' they thought,—  
'he in sooth is grief-distraught :  
Would we stood here with the foe!'

## LIX

But a fire flashed from his eye, 'twixt  
their thought and their reply,—

*Toll slowly.*

'Have ye so much time to waste? We  
who ride here, must ride fast,  
As we wish our foes to fly.'

## LX

They have fetched the steed with care,  
in the harness he did wear,

*Toll slowly.*

Past the court, and through the doors,  
across the rushes of the floors,  
But they goad him up the stair.

## LXI

Then from out her bower chambère, did  
the Duchess May repair.

*Toll slowly.*

'Tell me now what is your need,' said  
the lady, 'of this steed,  
That ye goad him up the stair?'

## LXII

Calm she stood; unbodkined through, fell  
her dark hair to her shoe,—

*Toll slowly.*

And the smile upon her face, ere she  
left the tiring-glass,  
Had not time enough to go.

## LXIII

'Get thee back, sweet Duchess May!  
hope is gone like yesterday,—

*Toll slowly.*

'One half-hour completes the breach;  
and thy lord grows wild of speech!  
Get thee in, sweet lady, and pray.

## LXIV

'In the east tower, high'st of all, loud  
he cries for steed from stall.'

*Toll slowly.*

'He would ride as far,' quoth he, 'as  
for love and victory,  
Though he rides the castle-wall.'

## LXV

'And we fetch the steed from stall, up  
where never a hoof did fall.'

*Toll slowly.*

'Wifely prayer meets deathly need!  
may the sweet Heavens hear thee  
plead  
If he rides the castle-wall.'

## LXVI

Low she dropt her head, and lower, till  
her hair coiled on the floor,—

*Toll slowly.*

And tear after tear you heard fall dis-  
tinct as any word  
Which you might be listening for.

## LXVII

'Get thee in, thou soft ladye!—here is  
never a place for thee!'

*Toll slowly.*

'Braid thine hair and clasp thy gown,  
that thy beauty in its moan  
May find grace with Leigh of Leigh.'

## LXVIII

She stood up in bitter case, with a pale  
yet steady face,

*Toll slowly.*

Like a statue thunderstruck, which,  
though quivering, seems to look  
Right against the thunder-place.

## LXIX

And her foot trod in, with pride, her  
own tears i' the stone beside.—

*Toll slowly.*

'Go to, faithful friends, go to!—judge  
no more what ladies do,—  
No, nor how their lords may ride!'

## LXX

Then the good steed's rein she took, and  
his neck did kiss and stroke :

*Toll slowly.*

Soft he neighed to answer her, and then  
followed up the stair,  
For the love of her sweet look.

## LXXI

Oh, and steeply, steeply wound up the  
narrow stair around !

*Toll slowly.*

Oh, and closely, closely speeding, step  
by step beside her treading,  
Did he follow, meek as hound.

## LXXII

On the east tower, high'st of all,—there,  
where never a hoof did fall,—

*Toll slowly.*

Out they swept, a vision steady,—noble  
steed and lovely lady,  
Calm as if in bower or stall.

## LXXIII

Down she knelt at her lord's knee, and  
she looked up silently,—

*Toll slowly.*

And he kissed her twice and thrice, for  
that look within her eyes  
Which he could not bear to see.

## LXXIV

Quoth he, 'Get thee from this strife,—  
and the sweet saints bless thy  
life!'—

*Toll slowly.*

'In this hour, I stand in need of my  
noble red-roan steed,  
But no more of my noble wife.'

## LXXV

Quoth she, 'Meekly have I done all thy  
biddings under sun ;'

*Toll slowly.*

'But by all my womanhood, which is  
proved so, true and good,  
I will never do this one.

## LXXVI

'Now by womanhood's degree, and by  
wifehood's verity,'

*Toll slowly.*

'In this hour if thou hast need of thy  
noble red-roan steed,  
Thou hast also need of *me*.

## LXXVII

'By this golden ring ye see on this  
lifted hand, pardiè,'

*Toll slowly.*

'If, this hour, on castle-wall, can be  
room for steed from stall,  
Shall be also room for *me*.

## LXXVIII

'So the sweet saints with me be' (did  
she utter solemnly)

*Toll slowly.*

'If a man, this eventide, on this castle  
wall will ride,  
He shall ride the same with *me*.

## LXXIX

Oh, he sprang up in the selle, and he  
laughed out bitter-well,—

*Toll slowly.*

'Wouldst thou ride among the leaves,  
as we used on other eves,  
To hear chime a vesper-bell ?'

## LXXX

She clang closer to his knee—'Aye, be-  
neath the cypress-tree !'—

*Toll slowly.*

'Mock me not, for otherwhere than along  
the greenwood fair  
Have I ridden fast with thee.

## LXXXI

'Fast I rode with new-made vows, from  
my angry kinsman's house.'

*Toll slowly.*

'What, and would you men should reck  
that I dared more for love's sake  
As a bride than as a spouse ?

## LXXXII

'What, and would you it should fall, as  
a proverb, before all,'

*Toll slowly.*

'That a bride may keep your side while  
through castle-gate you ride,  
Yet eschew the castle-wall ?'

## LXXXIII

Ho! the breach yawns into ruin, and  
 roars up against her suing,  
*Toll slowly.*

With the inarticulate din, and the  
 dreadful falling in—  
 Shrieks of doing and undoing!

## LXXXIV

Twice he wrung her hands in twain,  
 but the small hands closed again.

*Toll slowly.*

Back he reined the steed—back, back!  
 but she trailed along his track  
 With a frantic clasp and strain.

## LXXXV

Evermore the foemen pour through the  
 crash of window and door,—

*Toll slowly.*

And the shouts of Leigh and Leigh, and  
 the shrieks of 'kill!' and 'flee!'—  
 Strike up clear amid the roar.

## LXXXVI

Thrice he wrung her hands in twain,—  
 but they closed and clung again,—

*Toll slowly.*

Wild she clung, as one, withstood,  
 clasps a Christ upon the rood,  
 In a spasm of deathly pain.

## LXXXVII

She clung wild and she clung mute,  
 with hershuddering lip half-shut.

*Toll slowly.*

Her head fallen as half in swoond,—  
 hair and knees wept on the ground,  
 She clung wild to stirrup and foot.

## LXXXVIII

Back he reined his steed back-thrown  
 on the slippery coping-stone:

*Toll slowly.*

Back the iron hoofs did grind on the  
 battlement behind  
 Whence a hundred feet went down.

## LXXXIX

And his heel did press and goad on the  
 quivering flank bestrode,—

*Toll slowly.*

'Friends and brothers, save my wife!—  
 Pardon, sweet, in change for  
 life,—  
 But I ride alone to God.'

## xc

Straight as if the Holy name had up-  
 breathed her like a flame,

*Toll slowly.*

She upsprang, she rose upright,—in his  
 selle she sate in sight,  
 By her love she overcame.

## xci

And her head was on his breast, where  
 she smiled as one at rest,—

*Toll slowly.*

'Ring,' she cried, 'O vesper-bell, in the  
 beechwood's old chapelle!  
 But the passing-bell rings best.'

## xcii

They have caught out at the rein, which  
 Sir Guy threw loose—in vain,—

*Toll slowly.*

For the horse in stark despair, with his  
 front hoofs poised in air,  
 On the last verge rears amain.

## xciii

Now he hangs, he rocks between, and  
 his nostrils curdle in!—

*Toll slowly.*

Now he shivers head and hoof—and he  
 flakes of foam fall off,  
 And his face grows fierce and thin!

## xciv

And a look of human woe from his  
 staring eyes did go,

*Toll slowly.*

And a sharp cry uttered he, in a foretold  
 agony  
 Of the headlong death below,—

## xcv

And, 'Ring, ring, thou passing-bell,'  
 still she cried, 'i' the old chap-  
 elle!'

*Toll slowly.*

Then back-toppling, crashing back—  
 a dead weight flung out to wrack,  
 Horse and riders overfell.

## I

Oh, the little birds sang east, and the  
little birds sang west,

*Toll slowly.*

And I read this ancient Rime, in the  
churchyard, while the chime  
Slowly tolled for one at rest.

## II

The abeles moved in the sun, and the  
river smooth did run,

*Toll slowly.*

And the ancient Rime rang strange,  
with its passion and its change.  
Here, where all done lay undone.

## III

And beneath a willow tree, I a little  
grave did see,

*Toll slowly.*

Where was graved,—HERE UNDEFILED,  
LIETH MAUD, A THREE-YEAR CHILD,  
EIGHTEEN HUNDRED, FORTY-THREE.

## IV

Then, O spirits, did I say, ye who rode  
so fast that day,—

*Toll slowly.*

Did star-wheels and angel wings, with  
their holy winnowings,  
Keep beside you all the way?

## V

Though in passion ye would dash, with  
a blind and heavy crash,

*Toll slowly.*

Up against the thick-bossed shield of  
God's judgement in the field,—  
Though your heart and brain were  
rash,—

## VI

Now, your will is all unwilling—now,  
your pulses are all stilled!

*Toll slowly.*

Now, ye lie as meek and mild (whereso  
laid) as Maud the child,  
Whose small grave was lately filled.

## VII

Beating heart and burning brow, ye are  
very patient now,

*Toll slowly.*

And the children might be bold to pluck  
the kingcups from your mould  
Ere a month had let them grow.

## VIII

And you let the goldfinch sing in the alder  
near in spring,

*Toll slowly.*

Let her build her nest and sit all the  
three weeks out on it,  
Murmuring not at anything.

## IX

In your patience ye are strong; cold  
and heat ye take not wrong.

*Toll slowly.*

When the trumpet of the angel blows  
eternity's evangel,  
Time will seem to you not long.

## X

Oh, the little birds sang east, and the  
little birds sang west,

*Toll slowly.*

And I said in underbreath,—All our life  
is mixed with death,  
And who knoweth which is best?

## XI

Oh, the little birds sang east, and the  
little birds sang west,

*Toll slowly.*

And I smiled to think God's greatness  
flowed around our incomplete-  
ness,—  
Round our restlessness, His rest.

### THE ROMANCE OF THE SWAN'S NEST

So the dreams depart,  
So the fading phantoms flee,  
And the sharp reality  
Now must act its part.

WESTWOOD'S *Beads from a Rosary.*

## I

LITTLE Ellie sits alone  
Mid the beeches of a meadow,  
By a stream-side on the grass,  
And the trees are showering down  
Doubles of their leaves in shadow,  
On her shining hair and face.

## II

She has thrown her bonnet by,  
And her feet she has been dipping  
In the shallow water's flow;  
Now she holds them nakedly  
In her hands, all sleek and dripping,  
While she rocketh to and fro.

## III

Little Ellie sits alone,  
And the smile she softly uses,  
Fills the silence like a speech,  
While she thinks what shall be done,—  
And the sweetest pleasure chooses  
For her future within reach.

## IV

Little Ellie in her smile  
Chooses . . . 'I will have a lover,  
Riding on a steed of steeds!  
He shall love me without guile,  
And to *him* I will discover  
The swan's nest among the reeds.

## V

'And the steed shall be red-roan,  
And the lover shall be noble,  
With an eye that takes the breath;  
And the lute he plays upon,  
Shall strike ladies into trouble,  
As his sword strikes men to death.

## VI

'And the steed it shall be shod  
All in silver, housed in azure,  
And the mane shall swim the wind;  
And the hoofs along the sod  
Shall flash onward and keep measure,  
Till the shepherds look behind.

## VII

But my lover will not prize  
All the glory that he rides in,  
When he gazes in my face.  
He will say, "O Love, thine eyes  
Build the shrine my soul abides in,  
And I kneel here for thy grace."

## VIII

'Then, aye, then—he shall kneel low,  
With the red-roan steed anear him,  
Which shall seem to understand—  
Till I answer, "Rise and go!  
For the world must love and fear him  
Whom I gift with heart and hand."

## IX

'Then he will arise so pale,  
I shall feel my own lips tremble  
With a *yes* I must not say.  
Nathless maiden-brave, "Farewell,"  
I will utter, and dissemble—  
"Light to-morrow with to-day."

## X

'Then he'll ride among the hills  
To the wide world past the river,  
There to put away all wrong,  
To make straight distorted wills,  
And to empty the broad quiver  
Which the wicked bear along.

## XI

'Three times shall a young foot-page  
Swim the stream and climb the mountain  
And kneel down beside my feet—  
"Lo, my master sends this gage,  
Lady, for thy pity's counting!  
What wilt thou exchange for it?"

## XII

'And the first time, I will send  
A white rosebud for a guerdon,—  
And the second time, a glove;  
But the third time—I may bend  
From my pride, and answer—"Pardon,  
If he comes to take my love."

## XIII

'Then the young foot-page will run—  
Then my lover will ride faster,  
Till he kneeleth at my knee:  
"I am a duke's eldest son!  
Thousand serfs do call me master,—  
But, O Love, I love but *thee*!"

## XIV

'He will kiss me on the mouth  
Then, and lead me as a lover  
Through the crowds that praise his  
deeds:  
And, when soul-tied by one troth,  
Unto *him* I will discover  
That swan's nest among the reeds.'

## XV

Little Ellie, with her smile  
Not yet ended, rose up gaily,

Tied the bonnet, donned the shoe,  
And went homeward, round a mile,  
Just to see, as she did daily,  
What more eggs were with the two.

## XVI

Pushing through the elm-tree copse,  
Winding up the stream, light-hearted,  
Where the osier pathway leads—  
Past the boughs she stoops—and stops.  
Lo, the wild swan had deserted,  
And a rat had gnawed the reeds.

## XVII

Ellie went home sad and slow.  
If she found the lover ever,  
With his red-roan steed of steeds,  
Sooth I know not! but I know  
She could never show him—never,  
That swan's nest among the reeds!

## BERTHA IN THE LANE

## I

Pur the broidery-frame away,  
For my sewing is all done:  
The last thread is used to-day,  
And I need not join it on.  
Though the clock stands at the noon  
I am weary. I have sewn,  
Sweet, for thee, a wedding-gown.

## II

Sister, help me to the bed,  
And stand near me, Dearest-sweet.  
Do not shrink nor be afraid,  
Blushing with a sudden heat!  
No one standeth in the street?—  
By God's love I go to meet,  
Love I thee with love complete.

## III

Lean thy face down! drop it in  
These two hands, that I may hold  
'Twixt their palms thy cheek and chin,  
Stroking back the curls of gold.  
'Tis a fair, fair face, in sooth—  
Larger eyes and redder mouth  
Than mine were in my first youth.

## IV

Thou art younger by seven years—  
Ah!—so bashful at my gaze,  
That the lashes, hung with tears,  
Grow too heavy to upraise?  
I would wound thee by no touch  
Which thy shyness feels as such:  
Dost thou mind me, Dear, so much?

## V

Have I not been nigh a mother  
To thy sweetness—tell me, Dear?  
Have we not loved one another  
Tenderly, from year to year,  
Since our dying mother mild  
Said with accents undefiled,  
'Child, be mother to this child!

## VI

Mother, mother, up in heaven,  
Stand up on the jasper sea,  
And be witness I have given  
All the gifts required of me,—  
Hope that blessed me, bliss that  
crowned,  
Love, that left me with a wound,  
Life itself, that turneth round!

## VII

Mother, mother, thou art kind,  
Thou art standing in the room,  
In a molten glory shined,  
That rays off into the gloom!  
But thy smile is bright and bleak  
Like cold waves—I cannot speak,  
I sob in it, and grow weak.

## VIII

Ghostly mother, keep aloof  
One hour longer from my soul—  
For I still am thinking of  
Earth's warm-beating joy and dole!  
On my finger is a ring  
Which I still see glittering,  
When the night hides everything.

## IX

Little sister, thou art pale!  
Ah, I have a wandering brain—  
But I lose that fever-bale,  
And my thoughts grow calm again.  
Lean down closer—closer still!  
I have words thine ear to fill,—  
And would kiss thee at my will.

X

Dear, I heard thee in the spring,  
Thee and Robert—through the trees,—  
When we all went gathering  
Boughs of May-bloom for the bees.  
Do not start so! think instead  
How the sunshine overhead  
Seemed to trickle through the shade.

XI

What a day it was, that day!  
Hills and vales did openly  
Seem to heave and throb away  
At the sight of the great sky;  
And the Silence, as it stood  
In the Glory's golden flood,  
Audibly did bud—and bud.

XII

Through the winding hedgerows green,  
How we wandered, I and you,—  
With the bowery tops shut in,  
And the gates that showed the view!  
How we talked there! thrushes soft  
Sang our praises out—or oft  
Bleatings took them from the croft:

XIII

Till the pleasure grown too strong  
Left me muter evermore,  
And, the winding road being long,  
I walked out of sight, before,  
And so, wrapt in musings fond,  
Issued (past the wayside pond)  
On the meadow-lands beyond.

XIV

I sate down beneath the beech  
Which leans over to the lane,  
And the far sound of your speech  
Did not promise any pain;  
And I blessed you full and free,  
With a smile stooped tenderly  
O'er the May-flowers on my knee.

XV

But the sound grew into word  
As the speakers drew more near—  
Sweet, forgive me that I heard  
What you wished me not to hear.  
Do not weep so—do not shake—  
Oh,—I heard thee, Bertha, make  
Good true answers for my sake.

XVI

Yes, and HE too! let him stand  
In thy thoughts, untouched by blame.  
Could he help it, if my hand  
He had claimed with hasty claim?  
That was wrong perhaps—but then  
Such things be—and will, again.  
Women cannot judge for men.

XVII

Had he seen thee, when he swore  
He would love but me alone?  
Thou wert absent—sent before  
To our kin in Sidmouth town.  
When he saw thee who art best  
Past compare, and loveliest,  
He but judged thee as the rest.

XVIII

Could we blame him with grave words,  
Thou and I, Dear, if we might?  
Thy brown eyes have looks like birds,  
Flying straightway to the light:  
Mine are older.—Hush!—look out—  
Up the street! Is none without?  
How the poplar swings about.

XIX

And that hour—beneath the beech,  
When I listened in a dream,  
And he said in his deep speech,  
That he owed me all *esteem*,—  
Each word swam in on my brain  
With a dim, dilating pain,  
Till it burst with that last strain.

XX

I fell flooded with a dark,  
In the silence of a swoon.  
When I rose, still cold and stark,  
There was night,—I saw the moon,  
And the stars, each in its place,  
And the May-blooms on the grass,  
Seemed to wonder what I was.

XXI

And I walked as if apart  
From myself, when I could stand—  
And I pitied my own heart,  
As if I held it in my hand,  
Somewhat coldly,—with a sense  
Of fulfilled benevolence,  
And a 'Poor thing' negligence.

## XXII

And I answered coldly too,  
 When you met me at the door;  
 And I only *heard* the dew  
 Dripping from me to the floor;  
 And the flowers I bade you see  
 Were too withered for the bee,—  
 As my life, henceforth, for me.

## XXIII

Do not weep so—Dear—heart-warm!  
 All was best as it befell:  
 If I say he did me harm,  
 I speak wild,—I am not well.  
 All his words were kind and good—  
*He esteemed me!* Only, blood  
 Runs so faint in womanhood.

## XXIV

Then I always was too grave,—  
 Liked the saddest ballad sung,—  
 With that look, besides, we have  
 In our faces, who die young.  
 I had died, Dear, all the same;  
 Life's long, joyous, jostling game  
 Is too loud for my meek shame.

## XXV

We are so unlike each other,  
 Thou and I, that none could guess  
 We were children of one mother,  
 But for mutual tenderness.  
 Thou art rose-lined from the cold,  
 And meant, verily, to hold  
 Life's pure pleasures manifold.

## XXVI

I am pale as crocus grows  
 Close beside a rose-tree's root;  
 Whoso'er would reach the rose,  
 Treads the crocus underfoot.  
*I*, like May-bloom on thorn-tree—  
 Thou, like merry summer-bee!  
 Fit, that I be plucked for thee.

## XXVII

Yet who plucks me!—no one mourns,  
 I have lived my season out,  
 And now die of my own thorns  
 Which I could not live without.  
 Sweet, be merry! How the light  
 Comes and goes! If it be night,  
 Keep the candles in my sight.

## XXVIII

Are there footsteps at the door?  
 Look out quickly. Yea, or nay?  
 Some one might be waiting for  
 Some last word that I might say.  
 Nay? So best!—so angels would  
 Stand off clear from deathly road,  
 Not to cross the sight of God.

## XXIX

Colder grow my hands and feet.  
 When I wear the shroud I made,  
 Let the folds lie straight and neat,  
 And the rosemary be spread,  
 That if any friend should come  
 (To see *thee*, sweet!) all the room  
 May be lifted out of gloom.

## XXX

And, dear Bertha, let me keep  
 On my hand this little ring,  
 Which at nights, when others sleep,  
 I can still see glittering:  
 Let me wear it out of sight,  
 In the grave,—where it will light  
 All the dark up, day and night.

## XXXI

On that grave, drop not a tear!  
 Else, though fathom-deep the place,  
 Through the woollen shroud I wear  
 I shall feel it on my face.  
 Rather smile there, blessed one,  
 Thinking of me in the sun,  
 Or forget me—smiling on!

## XXXII

Art thou near me? nearer? so!  
 Kiss me close upon the eyes,  
 That the earthly light may go  
 Sweetly, as it used to rise.  
 When I watched the morning-grey  
 Strike, betwixt the hills, the way  
 He was sure to come that day.

## XXXIII

So,—no more vain words be said!—  
 The hosannas nearer roll.  
 Mother, smile now on thy Dead,  
 I am death-strong in my soul.  
 Mystic Dove alit on cross,  
 Guide the poor bird of the snows  
 Through the snow-wind above loss!

XXXIV

Jesus, Victim, comprehending  
Love's divine self-abnegation,  
Cleanse my love in its self-spending,  
And absorb the poor liberation!  
Wind my thread of life up higher,  
Up, through angels' hands of fire!—  
I aspire while I expire.

LADY GERALDINE'S COURTSHIP

A ROMANCE OF THE AGE

*A poet writes to his friend. PLACE—A room in Wycombe Hall. TIME—Late in the evening.*

DEAR my friend and fellow student,  
I would lean my spirit o'er you!  
Down the purple of this chamber, tears  
should scarcely run at will.  
I am humbled who was humble. Friend,  
—I bow my head before you.  
You should lead me to my peasants,—  
but their faces are too still.

There's a lady—an earl's daughter,—  
she is proud and she is noble,  
And she treads the crimson carpet, and  
she breathes the perfumed air,  
And a kingly blood sends glances up her  
princely eye to trouble,  
And the shadow of a monarch's crown  
is softened in her hair.

She has halls among the woodlands,  
she has castles by the breakers,  
She has farms and she has manors, she  
can threaten and command,  
And the palpitating engines snort in  
steam across her acres,  
As they mark upon the blasted heaven  
the measure of the land.

There are none of England's daughters  
who can show a prouder presence;  
Upon princely suitors praying, she has  
looked in her disdain.  
She was sprung of English nobles,  
I was born of English peasants;  
What was I that I should love her—  
save for competence to pain!

I was only a poor poet, made for singing  
at her casement,  
As the finches or the thrushes, while  
she thought of other things.  
Oh, she walked so high above me, she  
appeared to my abasement,  
In her lovely silken murmur, like an  
angel clad in wings!

Many vassals bow before her as her  
carriage sweeps their doorways;  
She has blest their little children,—as a  
priest or queen were she.  
Far too tender, or too cruel far, her  
smile upon the poor was,  
For I thought it was the same smile  
which she used to smile on me.

She has voters in the Commons, she has  
lovers in the palace;  
And of all the fair court-ladies, few have  
jewels half as fine;  
Oft the prince has named her beauty  
'twixt the red wine and the chalice.  
Oh, and what was I to love her? my  
beloved, my Geraldine!

Yet I could not choose but love her.  
I was born to poet-uses,  
To love all things set above me, all of  
good and all of fair:  
Nymphs of mountain, not of valley, we  
are wont to call the Muses  
And in nympholeptic climbing, poets  
pass from mount to star.

And because I was a poet, and because  
the public praised me,  
With a critical deduction for the modern  
writer's fault,  
I could sit at rich men's tables,—though  
the courtesies that raised me,  
Still suggested clear between us the  
pale spectrum of the salt.

And they praised me in her presence;  
—'Will your book appear this  
summer?'  
Then returning to each other—'Yes,  
our plans are for the moors.'  
Then with whisper dropped behind me  
—'There he is! the latest comer!  
Oh, she only likes his verses! what is  
over, she endures.

'Quite low-born! self-educated! somewhat gifted though by nature,—  
And we make a point of asking him,—  
of being very kind.  
You may speak, he does not hear you!  
and besides, he writes no satire,—  
All these serpents kept by charmers  
leave the natural sting behind.'

I grew scornfuller, grew colder, as I  
stood up there among them,  
Till as frost intense will burn you, the  
cold scorning scorched my brow;  
When a sudden silver speaking, gravely  
cadenced, over-rung them,  
And a sudden silken stirring touched  
my inner nature through.

I looked upward and beheld her. With  
a calm and regnant spirit,  
Slowly round she swept her eyelids,  
and said clear before them all—  
'Have you such superfluous honour, sir,  
that able to confer it  
You will come down, Mister Bertram,  
as my guest to Wycombe Hall?'

Here she paused,—she had been paler  
at the first word of her speaking,  
But because a silence followed it,  
blushed somewhat, as for shame,  
Then, as scorning her own feeling,  
resumed calmly—'I am seeking  
More distinction than these gentlemen  
think worthy of my claim.

'Ne'ertheless, you see, I seek it—not  
because I am a woman'  
(Here her smile sprang like a fountain,  
and, so, overflowed her mouth),  
'But because my woods in Sussex have  
some purple shades at gloaming  
Which are worthy of a king in state, or  
poet in his youth.

'I invite you, Mister Bertram, to no  
scene for worldly speeches—  
Sir, I scarce should dare—but only where  
God asked the thrushes first—  
And if you will sing beside them, in the  
covert of my beeches,  
I will thank you for the woodlands, . . .  
for the human world, at worst.'

Then she smiled around right childly,  
then she gazed around right  
queenly,  
And I bowed—I could not answer;  
alternated light and gloom—  
While as one who quells the lions, with  
a steady eye serenely,  
She, with level fronting eyelids, passed  
out stately from the room.

Oh, the blessed woods of Sussex, I can  
hear them still around me,  
With their leafy tide of greenery still  
rippling up the wind.  
Oh, the cursed woods of Sussex! where  
the hunter's arrow found me,  
When a fair face and a tender voice had  
made me mad and blind!

In that ancient hall of Wycombe, thronged  
the numerous guests invited,  
And the lovely London ladies trod the  
floors with gliding feet;  
And their voices low with fashion, not  
with feeling, softly freighted  
All the air about the windows, with  
elastic laughers sweet.

For at eve, the open windows flung their  
light out on the terrace,  
Which the floating orbs of curtains did  
with gradual shadow sweep,  
While the swans upon the river, fed at  
morning by the heiress,  
Trembled downward through their  
snowy wings at music in their  
sleep.

And there evermore was music, both of  
instrument and singing,  
Till the finches of the shrubberies grew  
restless in the dark;  
But the cedars stood up motionless,  
each in a moonlight ringing,  
And the deer, half in the glimmer,  
strewed the hollows of the park.

And though sometimes she would bind me  
with her silver-corded speeches  
To commix my words and laughter with  
the converse and the jest,  
Oft I sate apart, and gazing on the river  
through the beeches,  
Heard, as pure the swans swam down  
it, her pure voice o'erfloat the rest.

In the morning, horn of huntsman, hoof  
 of steed, and laugh of rider,  
 Spread out cheery from the court-yard  
 till we lost them in the hills,  
 While herself and other ladies, and her  
 suitors left beside her,  
 Went a-wandering up the gardens  
 through the laurels and abeles.

Thus, her foot upon the new-mown grass,  
 bareheaded, with the flowing  
 Of the virginal white vesture gathered  
 closely to her throat,—  
 And the golden ringlets in her neck  
 just quickened by her going,  
 And appearing to breathe sun for air,  
 and doubting if to float,—

With a branch of dewy maple, which  
 her right hand held above her,  
 And which trembled a green shadow in  
 betwixt her and the skies,  
 As she turned her face in going, thus,  
 she drew me on to love her,  
 And to worship the divineness of the  
 smile hid in her eyes.

For her eyes alone smile constantly :  
 her lips have serious sweetness,  
 And her front is calm—the dimple rarely  
 ripples on the cheek ;  
 But her deep blue eyes smile constantly,  
 as if they in discreetness  
 Kept the secret of a happy dream she  
 did not care to speak.

Thus she drew me the first morning,  
 out across into the garden,  
 And I walked among her noble friends  
 and could not keep behind.  
 Spake she unto all and unto me—  
 ' Behold, I am the warden  
 Of the song-birds in these lindens,  
 which are cages to their mind.

' But within this swarded circle, into  
 which the lime-walk brings us,  
 Whence the beeches, rounded greenly,  
 stand away in reverent fear,  
 I will let no music enter, saving what  
 the fountain sings us,  
 Which the lilies round the basin may  
 seem pure enough to hear.

' The live air that waves the lilies waves  
 the slender jet of water  
 Like a holy thought sent feebly up from  
 soul of fasting saint :  
 Whereby lies a marble Silence, sleeping !  
 (Lough the sculptor wrought her)  
 So asleep she is forgetting to say Hush !  
 —a fancy quaint.

' Mark how heavy white her eyelids !  
 not a dream between them lingers,  
 And the left hand's index droppeth from  
 the lips upon the cheek ;  
 While the right hand,—with the sym-  
 bol rose held slack within the  
 fingers,—  
 Has fallen backward in the basin—yet  
 this Silence will not speak !

' That the essential meaning growing  
 may exceed the special symbol,  
 Is the thought as I conceive it : it applies  
 more high and low.  
 Our true noblemen will often through  
 right nobleness grow humble,  
 And assert an inward honour by  
 denying outward show.'

' Nay, your Silence,' said I, ' truly, holds  
 her symbol rose but slackly,  
 Yet *she holds it*—or would scarcely be a  
 Silence to our ken ;  
 And your nobles wear their ermine on  
 the outside, or walk blackly  
 ' In the presence of the social law as  
 mere ignoble men.

' Let the poets dream such dreaming !  
 madam, in these British islands  
 'Tis the substance that wanes ever, 'tis  
 the symbol that exceeds.  
 Soon we shall have nought but symbol !  
 and, for statues like this Silence,  
 Shall accept the rose's image—in another  
 case, the weed's.'

' Not so quickly,' she retorted,—' I con-  
 fess, where'er you go, you  
 Find for things, names—shows for  
 actions, and pure gold for honour  
 clear ;  
 But when all is run to symbol in the  
 Social, I will throw you  
 The world's book which now reads dryly,  
 and sit down with Silence here.'

Half in playfulness she spoke, I thought,  
and half in indignation ;

Friends who listened, laughed her words  
off, while her lovers deemed her  
fair :

A fair woman, flushed with feeling, in  
her noble-lighted station

Near the statue's white reposing—and  
both bathed in sunny air !—

With the trees round, not so distant but  
you heard their vernal murmur,  
And beheld in light and shadow the  
leaves in and outward move,  
And the little fountain leaping toward  
the sun-heart to be warmer,  
Then recoiling in a tremble from the  
too much light above.

'Tis a picture for remembrance. And  
thus, morning after morning,  
Did I follow as she drew me by the  
spirit to her feet.

Why, her greyhound followed also !  
dogs—we both were dogs for  
scorning—

To be sent back when she pleased it and  
her path lay through the wheat.

And thus, morning after morning, spite  
of vows and spite of sorrow,  
Did I follow at her drawing, while the  
week-days passed along,  
Just to feed the swans this noontide, or  
to see the fawns to-morrow,  
Or to teach the hill-side echo some  
sweet Tuscan in a song.

Aye, for sometimes on the hill-side, while  
we sate down in the gowans,

With the forest green behind us, and  
its shadow cast before,

And the river running under, and across  
it from the rowans

A brown partridge whirring near us,  
till we felt the air it bore,—

There, obedient to her praying, did I  
read aloud the poems

Made to Tuscan flutes, or instruments  
more various of our own ;

Read the pastoral parts of Spenser—or  
the subtle interflowings

Found in Petrarch's sonnets—here 's the  
book—the leaf is folded down !

Or at times a modern volume,— Words-  
worth's solemn-thoughted idyl,

Howitt's ballad-verse, or Tennyson's  
enchanted reverie,—

Or from Browning some 'Pomegranate,'  
which, if cut deep down the  
middle,

Shows a heart within blood-tinctured,  
of a veined humanity.

Or at times I read there, hoarsely, some  
new poem of my making :

Poets ever fail in reading their own  
verses to their worth,—

For the echo in you breaks upon the  
words which you are speaking,

And the chariot-wheels jar in the gate  
through which you drive them  
forth.

After, when we were grown tired of  
books, the silence round us fling-  
ing

A slow arm of sweet compression, felt  
with beatings at the breast,

She would break out, on a sudden, in  
a gush of woodland singing,

Like a child's emotion in a god—a naiad  
tired of rest.

Oh, to see or hear her singing ! scarce  
I know which is divinest—

For her looks sing too—she modulates  
her gestures on the tune ;

And her mouth stirs with the song, like  
song ; and when the notes are  
finest,

'Tis the eyes that shoot out vocal light  
and seem to swell them on.

Then we talked—oh, how we talked ! her  
voice, so cadenced in the talking,

Made another singing—of the soul !  
a music without bars ;

While the leafy sounds of woodlands,  
humming round where we were  
walking,

Brought interposition worthy-sweet,—  
as skies about the stars.

And she spake such good thoughts  
natural, as if she always thought  
them ;

She had sympathies so rapid, open, free  
as bird on branch,

Just as ready to fly east as west, which-  
ever way besought them

In the birchen-wood a chirrup, or a  
cock-crow in the grange.

In her utmost lightness there is truth—  
and often she speaks lightly,

Has a grace in being gay, which even  
mournful souls approve,

For the root of some grave earnest  
thought is understruck so rightly

As to justify the foliage and the waving  
flowers above.

And she talked on—we talked, rather !  
upon all things, substance, shadow,

Of the sheep that browsed the grasses,  
of the reapers in the corn,

Of the little children from the schools,  
seen winding through the

meadow—  
Of the poor rich world beyond them, still  
kept poorer by its scorn.

So, of men, and so, of letters—books are  
men of higher stature,

And the only men that speak aloud for  
future times to hear ;

So, of mankind in the abstract, which  
grows slowly into nature,

Yet will lift the cry of 'progress,' as it  
trod from sphere to sphere.

And her custom was to praise me when  
I said,—'The Age culls simples,

With a broad clown's back turned  
broadly to the glory of the stars.

We are gods by our own reck'ning, and  
may well shut up the temples,

And wield on, amid the incense-steam,  
the thunder of our cars.

'For we throw out acclamations of self-  
thanking, self-admiring,

With, at every mile run faster,—“O the  
wondrous wondrous age,”

Little thinking if we work our souls as  
nobly as our iron,

Or if angels will commend us at the goal  
of pilgrimage.

'Why, what is this patient entrance  
into nature's deep resources,

But the child's most gradual learning to  
walk upright without bane ?

When we drive out, from the cloud of  
steam, majestic white horses,

Are we greater than the first men who  
led black ones by the mane ?

'If we trod the deeps of ocean, if we  
struck the stars in rising,

If we wrapped the globe intensely with  
one hot electric breath,

'Twere but power within our tether, no  
new spirit-power comprising,

And in life we were not greater men,  
nor bolder men in death.'

She was patient with my talking ; and  
I loved her, loved her, certes,

As I loved all heavenly objects, with  
uplifted eyes and hands !

As I loved pure inspirations, loved the  
graces, loved the virtues,

In a Love content with writing his own  
name on desert sands.

Or at least I thought so, purely !—thought  
no idiot Hope was raising

Any crown to crown Love's silence—  
silent Love that sate alone.

Out, alas ! the stag is like me—he, that  
tries to go on grazing

With the great deep gun-wound in his  
neck, then reels with sudden  
moan.

It was thus I reeled. I told you that her  
hand had many suitors ;

But she smiles them down imperially,  
as Venus did the waves,

And with such a gracious coldness, that  
they cannot press their futures

On the present of her courtesy, which  
yieldingly enslaves.

And this morning, as I sate alone within  
the inner chamber,

With the great saloon beyond it, lost in  
pleasant thought serene,

For I had been reading Camoëns—that  
poem you remember,

Which his lady's eyes are praised in, as  
the sweetest ever seen.

And the book lay open, and my thought  
flew from it, taking from it  
A vibration and impulsion to an end  
beyond its own,  
As the branch of a green osier, when a  
child would overcome it,  
Springs up freely from his clasping and  
goes swinging in the sun.

As I mused I heard a murmur,—it grew  
deep as it grew longer—  
Speakers using earnest language—  
'Lady Geraldine, you *would* !'  
And I heard a voice that pleaded ever  
on, in accents stronger  
As a sense of reason gave it power to  
make its rhetoric good.

Well I knew that voice—it was an earl's,  
of soul that matched his station,  
Soul completed into lordship—might and  
right read on his brow ;  
Very finely courteous—far too proud to  
doubt his domination  
Of the common people, he atones for  
grandeur by a bow.

High straight forehead, nose of eagle,  
cold blue eyes, of less expression  
Than resistance, coldly casting off the  
looks of other men,  
As steel, arrows,—inelastic lips, which  
seem to taste possession,  
And be cautious lest the common air  
should injure or distract.

For the rest, accomplished, upright,—  
aye, and standing by his order  
With a bearing not ungraceful ; fond of  
art and letters too ;  
Just a good man made a proud man,—as  
the sandy rocks that border  
A wild coast, by circumstances, in a  
regnant ebb and flow.

Thus, I knew that voice—I heard it, and  
I could not help the hearkening.  
In the room I stood up blindly, and my  
burning heart within  
Seemed to seethe and fuse my senses, till  
they ran on all sides darkening,  
And scorched, weighed, like melted metal  
round my feet that stood therein.

And that voice, I heard it pleading, for  
love's sake, for wealth, position,  
For the sake of liberal uses, and great  
actions to be done—  
And she interrupted gently, 'Nay, my  
lord, the old tradition  
Of your Normans, by some worthier hand  
than mine is, should be won.'

'Ah, that white hand !' he said quickly,—  
and in his he either drew it  
Or attempted—for with gravity and  
instance she replied,  
'Nay, indeed, my lord, this talk is vain,  
and we had best eschew it,  
And pass on, like friends, to other points  
less easy to decide.'

What he said again, I know not. It is  
likely that his trouble  
Worked his pride up to the surface, for  
she answered in slow scorn,  
'And your lordship judges rightly.  
Whom I marry, shall be noble,  
Aye, and wealthy. I shall never blush  
to think how he was born.'

There, I maddened ! her words stung me.  
Life swept through me into fever,  
And my soul sprang up astonished,  
sprang, full-statured in an hour.  
Know you what it is when anguish, with  
apocalyptic NEVER,  
To a Pythian height dilates you,—and  
despair sublimates to power ?

From my brain, the soul-wings budded,—  
waved a flame about my body,  
Whence conventions coiled to ashes.  
I felt self-drawn out, as man,  
From amalgamate false natures, and I  
saw the skies grow ruddy  
With the deepening feet of angels, and  
I knew what spirits can.

I was mad—inspired—say either !  
(anguish worketh inspiration)  
Was a man, or beast—perhaps so, for  
the tiger roars, when speared ;  
And I walked on, step by step, along  
the level of my passion—  
Oh my soul ! and passed the doorway  
to her face, and never feared.

He had left her, peradventure, when my  
footstep proved my coming—  
But for *her*—she half arose, then sate—  
grew scarlet and grew pale.  
Oh, she trembled!—'tis so always with  
a worldly man or woman  
In the presence of true spirits—what else  
*can* they do but quail?

Oh, she fluttered like a tame bird, in  
among its forest-brothers  
Far too strong for it; then drooping,  
bowed her face upon her hands—  
And I spake out wildly, fiercely, brutal  
truths of her and others:  
I, she planted in the desert, swathed her,  
windlike, with my sands.

I plucked up her social fictions, bloody-  
rooted though leaf-verdant,—  
Trode them down with words of shaming,  
—all the purple and the gold,  
All the 'landed stakes' and lordships,  
all, that spirits pure and ardent  
Are cast out of love and honour because  
chancing not to hold.

'For myself I do not argue,' said I,  
'though I love you, madam,  
But for better souls that nearer to the  
height of yours have trod;  
And this age shows, to my thinking, still  
more infidels to Adam,  
Than directly, by profession, simple in-  
fidels to God.

'Yet, O God,' I said, 'O grave,' I said,  
'O mother's heart and bosom,  
With whom first and last are equal,  
saint and corpse and little child!  
We are fools to your deductions, in these  
figments of heart-closing;  
We are traitors to your causes, in these  
sympathies defiled.

'Learn more reverence, madam, not for  
rank or wealth—*that* needs no  
learning,  
*That* comes quickly—quick as sin does,  
aye, and culminates to sin;  
But for Adam's seed, MAN! Trust me,  
'tis a clay above your scorning,  
With God's image stamped upon it, and  
God's kindling breath within.

'What right have you, madam, gazing in  
your palace mirror daily,  
Getting so by heart your beauty which  
all others must adore,  
While you draw the golden ringlets down  
your fingers, to vow gaily  
You will wed no man that's only good to  
God, and nothing more?

'Why, what right have you, made fair  
by that same God—the sweetest  
woman  
Of all women He has fashioned—with  
your lovely spirit-face,  
Which would seem too near to vanish if  
its smile were not so human,  
And your voice of holy sweetness, turn-  
ing common words to grace,

'What right *can* you have, God's other  
works to scorn, despise, revile  
them  
In the gross, as mere men, broadly—not  
as *noble* men, forsooth,—  
As mere Parias of the outer world, for-  
bidden to assail them  
In the hope of living, dying, near that  
sweetness of your mouth?

'Have you any answer, madam? If my  
spirit were less earthly,  
If its instrument were gifted with a better  
silver string,  
I would kneel down where I stand, and  
say—Behold me! I am worthy  
Of thy loving, for I love thee! I am  
worthy as a king.

'As it is—your ermined pride, I swear,  
shall feel this stain upon her,  
That I, poor, weak, tost with passion,  
scorned by me and you again,  
Love you, madam—dare to love you—to  
my grief and your dishonour,  
To my endless desolation, and your  
impotent disdain!'

More mad words like these—mere mad-  
ness! friend, I need not write  
them fuller,  
For I hear my hot soul dropping on the  
lines in showers of tears.

Oh, a woman! friend, a woman! why,  
a beast had scarce been duller  
Than roar bestial loud complaints against  
the shining of the spheres.

But at last there came a pause. I stood  
all vibrating with thunder  
Which my soul had used. The silence  
drew her face up like a call.  
Could you guess what word she uttered?  
She looked up, as if in wonder,  
With tears beaded on her lashes, and  
said 'Bertram!'—it was all.

If she had cursed me, and she might have  
—or if even, with queenly bearing  
Which at need is used by women, she  
had risen up and said,  
'Sir, you are my guest, and therefore I  
have given you a full hearing,  
Now, beseech you, choose a name exact-  
ing somewhat less, instead,'—

I had borne it!—but that 'Bertram'—  
why it lies there on the paper  
A mere word, without her accent,—and  
you cannot judge the weight  
Of the calm which crushed my passion:  
I seemed drowning in a vapour,—  
And her gentleness destroyed me whom  
her scorn made desolate.

So, struck backward and exhausted by  
that inward flow of passion  
Which had rushed on, sparing nothing,  
into forms of abstract truth,  
By a logic agonizing through unseemly  
demonstration,  
And by youth's own anguish turning  
grimly grey the hairs of youth,—

By the sense accursed and instant, that  
if even I spake wisely  
I spake basely—using truth, if what I  
spake, indeed was true,  
To avenge wrong on a woman—*her*, who  
sate there weighing nicely  
A poor manhood's worth, found guilty of  
such deeds as I could do!—

By such wrong and woe exhausted—  
what I suffered and occasioned,—  
As a wild horse through a city runs with  
lightning in his eyes,

And then dashing at a church's cold and  
passive wall, impassioned,  
Strikes the death into his burning brain,  
and blindly drops and dies—

So I fell, struck down before her! do  
you blame me, friend, for weak-  
ness?

'Twas my strength of passion slew me!  
—fell before her like a stone.

Fast the dreadful world rolled from me,  
on its roaring wheels of black-  
ness—

When the light came, I was lying in this  
chamber, and alone.

Oh, of course, she charged her lacqueys  
to bear out the sickly burden,  
And to cast it from her scornful sight—  
but not *beyond* the gate;

She is too kind to be cruel, and too  
haughty not to pardon

Such a man as I—'twere something to  
be level to her hate.

But for me—you now are conscious  
why, my friend, I write this letter,  
How my life is read all backward, and  
the charm of life undone:

I shall leave her house at dawn; I would  
to-night, if I were better—

And I charge my soul to hold my body  
strengthened for the sun.

When the sun has dyed the oriel, I depart,  
with no last gazes,

No weak moanings (one word only, left  
in writing for her hands),

Out of reach of all derision, and some  
unavailing praises,

To make front against this anguish in the  
far and foreign lands.

Blame me not. I would not squander  
life in grief—I am abstemious:

I but nurse my spirit's falcon, that its  
wing may soar again.

There's no room for tears of weakness in  
the blind eyes of a Phemius!

Into work the poet kneads them,—and  
he does not die *till then*.

## CONCLUSION

Bertram finished the last pages, while  
 along the silence ever  
 Still in hot and heavy splashes, fell the  
 tears on every leaf:  
 Having ended he leans backward in his  
 chair, with lips that quiver  
 From the deep unspoken, aye, and deep  
 unwritten thoughts of grief.

Soh! how still the lady standeth! 'tis a  
 dream—a dream of mercies!  
 'Twixt the purple lattice-curtains, how  
 she standeth still and pale!  
 'Tis a vision, sure, of mercies, sent to  
 soften his self-curses—  
 Sent to sweep a patient quiet o'er the  
 tossing of his wail.

'Eyes,' he said, 'now throbbing through  
 me! are ye eyes that did undo me?  
 Shining eyes, like antique jewels set in  
 Parian statue-stone!  
 Underneath that calm white forehead, are  
 ye ever burning torrid  
 O'er the desolate sand-desert of my heart  
 and life undone!'

With a murmurous stir uncertain, in the  
 air, the purple curtain  
 Swelleth in and swelleth out around her  
 motionless pale brows,  
 While the gliding of the river sends a  
 rippling noise for ever  
 Through the open casement whitened by  
 the moonlight's slant repose.

Said he—'Vision of a lady! stand there  
 silent, stand there steady!  
 Now I see it plainly, plainly; now I  
 cannot hope or doubt—  
 There, the brows of mild repression—  
 there, the lips of silent passion,  
 Curved like an archer's bow to send the  
 bitter arrows out.'

Ever, evermore the while in a slow  
 silence she kept smiling,  
 And approached him slowly, slowly, in  
 a gliding measured pace;

With her two white hands extended, as  
 if praying one offended,  
 And a look of supplication, gazing earnest  
 in his face.

Said he—'Wake me by no gesture,—  
 sound of breath, or stir of vesture!  
 Let the blessed apparition melt not yet  
 to its divine!  
 No approaching—hush, no breathing! or  
 my heart must swoon to death in  
 The too utter life thou bringest—O thou  
 dream of Geraldine!'

Ever, evermore the while in a slow  
 silence she kept smiling—  
 But the tears ran over lightly from her  
 eyes, and tenderly;  
 'Dost thou, Bertram, truly love me?  
 Is no woman far above me  
 Found more worthy of thy poet-heart  
 than such a one as I?'

Said he—'I would dream so ever, like  
 the flowing of that river,  
 Flowing ever in a shadow greenly onward  
 to the sea!  
 So, thou vision of all sweetness—princely  
 to a full completeness,—  
 Would my heart and life flow onward—  
 deathward—through this dream  
 of THEE!'

Ever, evermore the while in a slow  
 silence she kept smiling,  
 While the silver tears ran faster down  
 the blushing of her cheeks;  
 Then with both her hands enfolding both  
 of his, she softly told him,  
 'Bertram, if I say I love thee, . . . 'tis  
 the vision only speaks.'

Softened, quickened to adore her, on his  
 knee he fell before her—  
 And she whispered low in triumph, 'It  
 shall be as I have sworn!  
 Very rich he is in virtues,—very noble—  
 noble, certes;  
 And I shall not blush in knowing that  
 men call him lowly born.'

# THE RUNAWAY SLAVE AT PILGRIM'S POINT

## I

I STAND on the mark beside the shore  
Of the first white pilgrim's bended  
knee,  
Where exile turned to ancestor,  
And God was thanked for liberty ;  
I have run through the night, my skin  
is as dark,  
I bend my knee down on this mark . . .  
I look on the sky and the sea.

## II

O pilgrim-souls, I speak to you !  
I see you come out proud and slow  
From the land of the spirits pale as dew,  
And round me and round me ye go !  
O pilgrims, I have gasped and run  
All night long from the whips of one  
Whoin your names works sin and woe.

## III

And thus I thought that I would come  
And kneel here where ye knelt before,  
And feel your souls around me hum  
In undertone to the ocean's roar ;  
And lift my black face, my black hand,  
Here, in your names, to curse this land  
Ye blessed in freedom's, evermore.

## IV

I am black, I am black !  
And yet God made me, they say ;  
But if He did so, smiling back  
He must have cast His work away  
Under the feet of His white creatures,  
With a look of scorn,—that the dusky  
features  
Might be trodden again to clay.

## V

And yet He has made dark things  
To be glad and merry as light :  
There's a little dark bird sits and sings ;  
There's a dark stream ripples out of  
sight ;

And the dark frogs chant in the safe  
morass,  
And the sweetest stars are made to pass  
O'er the face of the darkest night.

## VI

But *we* who are dark, we are dark !  
Ah God, we have no stars !  
About our souls in care and cark  
Our blackness shuts like prison-bars ;  
The poor souls crouch so far behind  
That never a comfort can they find  
By reaching through the prison-bars.

## VII

Indeed we live beneath the sky,  
That great smooth Hand of God  
stretched out  
On all His children fatherly,  
To save them from the dread and doubt  
Which would be, if, from this low place,  
All opened straight up to His face  
Into the grand eternity.

## VIII

And still God's sunshine and His frost,  
They make us hot, they make us cold,  
As if we were not black and lost ;  
And the beasts and birds, in wood and  
fold,  
Do fear and take us for very men !  
Could the whip-poor-will or the cat of  
the glen  
Look into my eyes and be bold ?

## IX

I am black, I am black !—  
But, once, I laughed in girlish glee,  
For one of my colour stood in the track  
Where the drivers drove, and looked  
at me,  
And tender and full was the look he  
gave—  
Could a slave look so at another slave ?—  
I look at the sky and the sea.

## X

And from that hour our spirits grew  
As free as if unsold, unbought :  
Oh, strong enough, since we were two,  
To conquer the world, we thought !  
The drivers drove us day by day ;  
We did not mind, we went one way,  
And no better a freedom sought.

## XI

In the sunny ground between the canes,  
 He said 'I love you' as he passed :  
 When the shingle-roof rang sharp with  
     the rains,  
 I heard how he vowed it fast ;  
 While others shook he smiled in the hut,  
 As he carved me a bowl of the coco-nut  
     Through the roar of the hurricanes.

## XII

I sang his name instead of a song,  
 Over and over I sang his name—  
 Upward and downward I drew it along  
     My various notes,—the same, the same !  
 I sang it low, that the slave-girls near  
 Might never guess from aught they could  
     hear,  
 It was only a name—a name.

## XIII

I look on the sky and the sea.  
 We were two to love, and two to  
     pray,—  
 Yes, two, O God, who cried to Thee,  
     Though nothing didst Thou say.  
 Coldly Thou sat'st behind the sun !  
 And now I cry who am but one,  
     Thou wilt not speak to-day.—

## XIV

We were black, we were black,  
 We had no claim to love and bliss,  
 What marvel, if each went to wrack ?  
     They wrung my cold hands out of his,—  
 They dragged him . . . where ? . . . I  
     crawled to touch  
 His blood's mark in the dust ! . . . not much,  
 Ye pilgrim-souls, . . . though plain as  
     *this !*

## XV

Wrong, followed by a deeper wrong !  
 Mere grief's too good for such as I ;  
 So the white men brought the shame  
     ere long  
 To strangle the sob of my agony.  
 They would not leave me for my dull  
 Wet eyes !—it was too merciful  
 To let me weep pure tears and die.

## XVI

I am black, I am black !  
 I wore a child upon my breast . . .  
 An amulet that hung too slack,  
 And, in my unrest, could not rest.  
 Thus we went moaning, child and mother,  
 One to another, one to another,  
     Until all ended for the best.

## XVII

For hark ! I will tell you low . . . low . . .  
 I am black, you see,—  
 And the babe who lay on my bosom so,  
     Was far too white . . . too white for me ;  
 As white as the ladies who scorned to pray  
 Beside me at church but yesterday,  
     Though my tears had washed a place  
     for my knee.

## XVIII

My own, own child ! I could not bear  
 To look in his face, it was so white ;  
 I covered him up with a kerchief there ;  
 I covered his face in close and tight :  
 And he moaned and struggled, as well  
     might be,  
 For the white child wanted his liberty—  
     Ha, ha ! he wanted the master-right.

## XIX

He moaned and beat with his head and  
     feet,  
 His little feet that never grew—  
 He struck them out, as it was meet,  
 Against my heart to break it through.  
 I might have sung and made him mild—  
 But I dared not sing to the white-faced  
     child  
 The only song I knew.

## XX

I pulled the kerchief very close :  
 He could not see the sun, I swear,  
 More, then, alive, than now he does  
     From between the roots of the mango  
     . . . where !  
 . . . I know where. Close ! a child and  
     mother  
 Do wrong to look at one another,  
     When one is black and one is fair.

## XXI

Why, in that single glance I had  
Of my child's face, . . I tell you all,  
I saw a look that made me mad!  
The *master's* look, that used to fall  
On my soul like his lash . . or worse!—  
And so, to save it from my curse,  
I twisted it round in my shawl.

## XXII

And he moaned and trembled from foot  
to head,  
He shivered from head to foot;  
Till, after a time, he lay instead  
Too suddenly still and mute.  
I felt, beside, a stiffening cold:  
I dared to lift up just a fold, . .  
As in lifting a leaf of the mango-fruit.

## XXIII

But *my* fruit . . ha, ha!—there, had been  
(I laugh to think on't at this hour!)  
Your fine white angels (who have seen  
Nearest the secret of God's power)  
And plucked my fruit to make them wine,  
And sucked the soul of that child of mine,  
As the humming-bird sucks the soul  
of the flower.

## XXIV

Ha, ha, the trick of the angels white!  
They freed the white child's spirit so.  
I said not a word, but, day and night,  
I carried the body to and fro,  
And it lay on my heart like a stone . .  
as chill.  
—The sun may shine out as much as he  
will:  
I am cold, though it happened a month  
ago.

## XXV

From the white man's house, and the  
black man's hut,  
I carried the little body on;  
The forest's arms did round us shut,  
And silence through the trees did run.  
They asked no question as I went,—  
They stood too high for astonishment,—  
They could see God sit on His throne.

## XXVI

My little body, kerchiefed fast,  
I bore it on through the forest . . on;  
And when I felt it was tired at last,  
I scooped a hole beneath the moon.  
Through the forest-tops the angels far,  
With a white sharp finger from every star,  
Did point and mock at what was done.

## XXVII

Yet when it was all done aright, . .  
Earth, 'twixt me and my baby,  
strewed, . .  
All, changed to black earth, . . nothing  
white, . .  
A dark child in the dark!—cnsued  
Some comfort, and my heart grew young;  
I sate down smiling there and sung  
The song I learnt in my maidenhood.

## XXVIII

And thus we two were reconciled,  
The white child and black mother, thus;  
For, as I sang it soft and wild,  
The same song, more melodious,  
Rose from the grave whereon I sate:  
It was the dead child singing that,  
To join the souls of both of us.

## XXIX

I look on the sea and the sky!  
Where the pilgrims' ships first anchored  
lay  
The free sun rideth gloriously,  
But the pilgrim-ghosts have slid away  
Through the earliest streaks of the morn:  
My face is black, but it glares with a scorn  
Which they dare not meet by day.

## XXX

Ah!—in their 'stead, their hunter sons!  
Ah, ah! they are on me—they hunt in  
a ring—  
Keep off! I brave you all at once—  
I throw off your eyes like snakes that  
sting!  
You have killed the black eagle at nest,  
I think:  
Did you never stand still in your triumph,  
and shrink  
From the stroke of her wounded wing?

## XXXI

(Man, drop that stone you dared to lift!—)

I wish you who stand there five  
a-breast,  
Each, for his own wife's joy and gift,  
A little corpse as safely at rest  
As mine in the mangos!—Yes, but *she*  
May keep live babies on her knee,  
And sing the song she likes the best.

## XXXII

I am not mad : I am black.  
I see you staring in my face—  
I know you staring, shrinking back,  
Ye are born of the Washington-race,  
And this land is the free America,  
And this mark on my wrist . . . (I prove  
what I say)  
Ropes tied me up here to the flogging-  
place.

## XXXIII

You think I shrieked then ? Not a sound !  
I hung, as a gourd hangs in the sun ;  
I only cursed them all around  
As softly as I might have done  
My very own child.—From these sands  
Up to the mountains, lift your hands,  
O slaves, and end what I begun !

## XXXIV

Whips, curses ; these must answer those !  
For in this UNION you have set  
Two kinds of men in adverse rows,  
Each loathing each ; and all forget  
The seven wounds in Christ's body fair,  
While HE sees gaping everywhere  
Our countless wounds that pay no debt.

## XXXV

Our wounds are different. Your white  
men  
Are, after all, not gods indeed,  
Nor able to make Christs again  
Do good with bleeding. *We* who bleed  
(Stand off ! ) we help not in our loss !  
*We* are too heavy for our cross,  
And fall and crush you and your seed.

## XXXVI

I fall, I swoon ! I look at the sky ;  
The clouds are breaking on my brain .  
I am floated along, as if I should die  
Of liberty's exquisite pain.  
In the name of the white child waiting  
for me  
In the death-dark where we may kiss  
and agree,  
White men, I leave you all curse-free  
In my broken heart's disdain !

## THE CRY OF THE CHILDREN

Φεῦ, φεῦ τί προσδέρκεσθ' ἐμ' ὀμμασιν, τέκνα ;  
*Medea.*

## I

Do ye hear the children weeping, O my  
brothers,  
Ere the sorrow comes with years !  
They are leaning their young heads  
against their mothers,  
And *that* cannot stop their tears.  
The young lambs are bleating in the  
meadows,  
The young birds are chirping in the  
nest,  
The young fawns are playing with the  
shadows,  
The young flowers are blowing toward  
the west—  
But the young, young children, O my  
brothers,  
They are weeping bitterly !  
They are weeping in the playtime of the  
others,  
In the country of the free.

## II

Do you question the young children in  
the sorrow,  
Why their tears are falling so ?  
The old man may weep for his to-morrow—  
Which is lost in Long Ago ;  
The old tree is leafless in the forest,  
The old year is ending in the frost,  
The old wound, if stricken, is the sorest,  
The old hope is hardest to be lost.

But the young, young children, O my  
brothers,

Do you ask them why they stand  
Weeping sore before the bosoms of their  
mothers,  
In our happy Fatherland?

## III

They look up with their pale and sunken  
faces,  
And their looks are sad to see,  
For the man's hoary anguish draws and  
presses

Down the cheeks of infancy.  
'Your old earth,' they say, 'is very dreary;  
Our young feet,' they say, 'are very  
weak!

Few paces have we taken, yet are  
weary—

Our grave-rest is very far to seek.  
Ask the aged why they weep, and not  
the children;

For the outside earth is cold;  
And we young ones stand without, in  
our bewildering,  
And the graves are for the old.'

## IV

'True,' say the children, 'it may happen  
That we die before our time;  
Little Alice died last year—her grave is  
shapen

Like a snowball, in the rime.  
We looked into the pit prepared to take  
her:

Was no room for any work in the close  
clay!

From the sleep wherein she lieth none  
will wake her,

Crying, "Get up, little Alice! it is day."  
If you listen by that grave, in sun and  
shower,

With your ear down, little Alice never  
cries;

'Could we see her face, be sure we should  
not know her,

For the smile has time for growing in  
her eyes:

And merry go her moments, lulled and  
stilled in

The shroud by the kirk-chime!  
It is good when it happens,' say the  
children,

'That we die before our time.'

## V

Alas, alas, the children! they are seeking  
Death in life, as best to have;

They are binding up their hearts away  
from breaking,

With a cerement from the grave.  
Go out, children, from the mine and from  
the city,

Sing out, children, as the little thrushes  
do;

Pluck you handfuls of the meadow cow-  
slips pretty,

Laugh aloud, to feel your fingers let  
them through!

But they answer, 'Are your cowslips of  
the meadows

Like our weeds anear the mine?  
Leave us quiet in the dark of the coal-  
shadows,

From your pleasures fair and fine!

## VI

'For oh,' say the children, 'we are weary,  
And we cannot run or leap;

If we cared for any meadows, it were  
merely

To drop down in them and sleep.  
Our knees tremblesorely in the stooping,

We fall upon our faces, trying to go;  
And, underneath our heavy eyelids droop-  
ing,

The reddest flower would look as pale  
as snow;

For, all day, we drag our burden tiring  
Through the coal-dark, under-  
ground—

Or, all day, we drive the wheels of iron  
In the factories, round and round.

## VII

'For, all day, the wheels are droning,  
turning,—

Their wind comes in our faces,—  
Till our hearts turn,—our head, with  
pulses burning,

And the walls turn in their places:  
Turns the sky in the high window blank  
and reeling,

Turns the long light that drops adown  
the wall,

Turn the black flies that crawl along the  
ceiling,

All are turning, all the day, and we  
with all.

And all day, the iron wheels are droning,  
And sometimes we could pray,  
"O ye wheels" (breaking out in a mad  
moaning),  
"Stop! be silent for to-day!"

## VIII

Aye! be silent! Let them hear each other  
breathing  
For a moment, mouth to mouth!  
Let them touch each other's hands, in  
a fresh wreathing  
Of their tender human youth!  
Let them feel that this cold metallic  
motion  
Is not all the life God fashions or  
reveals:  
Let them prove their living souls against  
the notion  
That they live in you, or under you,  
O wheels!—  
Still, all day, the iron wheels go onward,  
Grinding life down from its mark;  
And the children's souls, which God is  
calling sunward,  
Spin on blindly in the dark.

## IX

Now tell the poor young children, O my  
brothers,  
To look up to Him and pray;  
So the blessed One who blesseth all the  
others,  
Will bless them another day.  
They answer, 'Who is God that He  
should hear us,  
While the rushing of the iron wheels  
is stirred?  
When we sob aloud, the human creatures  
near us  
Pass by, hearing not, or answer not  
a word.  
And we hear not (for the wheels in their  
resounding)  
Strangers speaking at the door:  
Is it likely God, with angels singing  
round Him,  
Hears our weeping any more?

## X

'Two words, indeed, of praying we  
remember,  
And at midnight's hour of harm,

"Our Father," looking upward in the  
chamber,  
We say softly for a charm<sup>1</sup>.  
We know no other words, except "Our  
Father,"

And we think that, in some pause of  
angels' song,  
God may pluck them with the silence  
sweet to gather,  
And hold both within His right hand  
which is strong.  
"Our Father!" If He heard us, He  
would surely  
(For they call Him good and mild)  
Answer, smiling down the steep world  
very purely,  
"Come and rest with Me, My child."

## XI

'But, no!' say the children, weeping  
faster,  
'He is speechless as a stone;  
And they tell us, of His image is the master  
Who commands us to work on.  
Goto!' say the children,—'up in Heaven,  
Dark, wheel-like, turning clouds are  
all we find.  
Do not mock us; grief has made us un-  
believing—  
We look up for God, but tears have  
made us blind.'  
Do you hear the children weeping and  
disproving,  
O my brothers, what ye preach?  
For God's possible is taught by His  
world's loving,  
And the children doubt of each.

## XII

And well may the children weep before  
you!  
They are weary ere they run;  
They have never seen the sunshine, nor  
the glory  
Which is brighter than the sun.

<sup>1</sup> A fact rendered pathetically historical by Mr. Horne's report of his Commission. The name of the poet of *Orion* and *Cosmo de Medici* has, however, a change of associations, and comes in time to remind me that we have some noble poetic heat of literature still,—however open to the reproach of being somewhat gelid in our humanity. [1844.]

They know the grief of man, without its wisdom ;

They sink in man's despair, without its calm ;

Are slaves, without the liberty in Christ-  
dom,

Are martyrs, by the pang without the palm,—

Are worn, as if with age, yet unretriev-  
ingly

The harvest of its memories cannot  
reap,—

Are orphans of the earthly love and  
heavenly.

Let them weep ! let them weep !

### XIII

They look up, with their pale and sunken  
faces,

And their look is dread to see,  
For they mind you of their angels in  
high places,

With eyes turned on Deity !—

'How long,' they say, 'how long, O cruel  
nation,

Will you stand, to move the world, on  
a child's heart,—

Stifle down with a mailed heel its palpi-  
tation,

And tread onward to your throne amid  
the mart ?

Our blood splashes upward, O gold-  
heaper,

And your purple shows your path !

But the child's sob in the silence curses  
deeper

Than the strong man in his wrath.'

### A CHILD ASLEEP

#### I

How he sleepeth, having drunken

Weary childhood's mandragore !

From his pretty eyes have sunken

Pleasures to make room for more—

Sleeping near the withered nosegay  
which he pulled the day before.

#### II

Nosegays ! leave them for the waking ;  
Throw them earthward where they

grew ;

Dim are such, beside the breaking

Amaranths he looks unto :

Folded eyes see brighter colours than  
the open ever do.

#### III

Heaven-flowers, rayed by shadows  
golden

From the palms they sprang beneath,

Now perhaps divinely holden,

Swing against him in a wreath :

We may think so from the quickening  
of his bloom and of his breath.

#### IV

Vision unto vision calleth,

While the young child dreameth on ;

Fair, O dreamer, thee befalleth

With the glory thou hast won !

Darker wert thou in the garden, yester-  
morn by summer sun.

#### V

We should see the spirits ringing

Round thee, were the clouds away ;

'Tis the child-heart draws them,  
singing

In the silent-seeming clay :

Singing !—stars that seem the mutest,  
go in music all the way.

#### VI

As the moths around a taper,

As the bees around a rose,

As the gnats around a vapour,

So the spirits group and close

Round about a holy childhood, as if  
drinking its repose.

#### VII

Shapes of brightness overlean thee,

Flash their diadems of youth

On the ringlets which half screen thee,

While thou smilest . . . not in sooth

Thy smile, but the overfair one, dropt  
from some ethereal mouth.

## VIII

Haply it is angels' duty,  
 During slumber, shade by shade  
 To fine down this childish beauty  
 To the thing it must be made,  
 Ere the world shall bring it praises, or  
 the tomb shall see it fade.

## IX

Softly, softly! make no noises!  
 Now he lieth dead and dumb;  
 Now he hears the angels' voices  
 Folding silence in the room;  
 Now he muses deep the meaning of the  
 Heaven-words as they come.

## X

Speak not! he is consecrated;  
 Breathe no breath across his eyes:  
 Lifted up and separated  
 On the hand of God he lies,  
 In a sweetness beyond touching,—held  
 in cloistral sanctities.

## XI

Could ye bless him—father—mother,  
 Bless the dimple in his cheek?  
 Dare ye look at one another,  
 And the benediction speak?  
 Would ye not break out in weeping, and  
 confess yourselves too weak?

## XII

He is harmless—ye are sinful;  
 Ye are troubled—he, at ease;  
 From his slumber, virtue winful  
 Floweth outward with increase.  
 Dare not bless him! but be blessed by  
 his peace—and go in peace.

## THE FOURFOLD ASPECT

## I

WHEN ye stood up in the house  
 With your little childish feet,  
 And, in touching Life's first shows,  
 First the touch of Love did meet,—  
 Love and Nearness seeming one,  
 By the heartlight cast before,  
 And, of all Belovèds, none  
 Standing farther than the door!

Not a name being dear to thought,  
 With its owner beyond call;  
 Nor a face, unless it brought  
 Its own shadow to the wall;  
 When the worst recorded change  
 Was of apple dropt from bough,  
 When love's sorrow seemed more  
 strange

Than love's treason can seem now,—  
 Then, the Loving took you up  
 Soft, upon their elder knees,—  
 Telling why the statues droop  
 Underneath the churchyard trees,  
 And how ye must lie beneath them  
 Through the winters long and deep,  
 Till the last trump overbreathe them,  
 And ye smile out of your sleep . . .

Oh, ye lifted up your head, and it seemed  
 as if they said  
 A tale of fairy ships  
 With a swan-wing for a sail!—  
 Oh, ye kissed their loving lips  
 For the merry, merry tale!—  
 So carelessly ye thought upon the Dead.

## II

Soon ye read in solemn stories  
 Of the men of long ago—  
 Of the pale bewildering glories  
 Shining farther than we know;  
 Of the heroes with the laurel,  
 Of the poets with the bay,  
 Of the two worlds' earnest quarrel  
 For that beauteous Helena;  
 How Achilles at the portal  
 Of the tent, heard footsteps nigh,  
 And his strong heart, half-immortal  
 Met the *katai* with a cry;  
 How Ulysses left the sunlight  
 For the pale eidola race  
 Blank and passive through the dun  
 light,

Staring blindly in his face;  
 How that true wife said to Paetus,  
 With calm smile and wounded heart,  
 'Sweet, it hurts not!'—how Admetus  
 Saw his blessed one depart;  
 How King Arthur proved his mission,  
 And Sir Roland wound his horn,  
 And at Sangreal's moony vision  
 Swords did bristle round like corn.  
 Oh, ye lifted up your head, and it seemed  
 the while ye read,

That this Death, then, must be found  
 A Valhalla for the crowned,  
 The heroic who prevail :  
 None, be sure, can enter in  
 Far below a paladin  
 Of a noble, noble tale!—  
 So awfully ye thought upon the Dead.

## III

Aye, but soon ye woke up shrieking,—  
 As a child that wakes at night  
 From a dream of sisters speaking  
 In a garden's summer-light,—  
 That wakes, starting up and bounding,  
 In a lonely, lonely bed,  
 With a wall of darkness round him,  
 Stifling black about his head!—  
 And the full sense of your mortal  
 Rushed upon you deep and loud,  
 And ye heard the thunder hurtle  
 From the silence of the cloud!  
 Funeral-torches at your gateway  
 Threw a dreadful light within.  
 All things changed! you rose up  
 straightway,  
 And saluted Death and Sin.  
 Since,—your outward man has rallied,  
 And your eye and voice grown  
 bold—  
 Yet the Sphinx of Life stands pallid,  
 With her saddest secret told.  
 Happy places have grown holy :  
 If ye went where once ye went,  
 Only tears would fall down slowly,  
 As at solemn sacrament.  
 Merry books, once read for pastime,  
 If ye dared to read again,  
 Only memories of the last time  
 Would swim darkly up the brain.  
 Household names, which used to flutter  
 Through your laughter unawares,—  
 God's Divinest ye could utter  
 With less trembling in your prayers!  
 Ye have dropt adown your head, and it  
 seems as if ye tread  
 On your own hearts in the path  
 Ye are called to in His wrath,—  
 And your prayers go up in wail!  
 —'Dost Thou see, then, all our loss,  
 O Thou agonized on cross?  
 Art thou reading all its tale?'  
 So mournfully ye think upon the Dead.

## IV

Pray, pray, thou who also weepst,  
 And the drops will slacken so.  
 Weep, weep,—and the watch thou  
 keepest  
 With a quicker count will go.  
 Think,—the shadow on the dial  
 For the nature most undone,  
 Marks the passing of the trial,  
 Proves the presence of the sun.  
 Look, look up, in starry passion,  
 To the throne above the spheres!  
 Learn,—the spirit's gravitation  
 Still must differ from the tear's.  
 Hope,—with all the strength thou usest  
 In embracing thy despair.  
 Love,—the earthly love thou lovest  
 Shall return to thee more fair.  
 Work,—make clear the forest-tangles  
 Of the wildest stranger-land.  
 Trust,—the blessed deathly angels  
 Whisper, 'Sabbath hours at hand!'  
 By the heart's wound when most gory,  
 By the longest agony,  
 Smile!—Behold, in sudden glory  
 The TRANSFIGURED smiles on *thee*!  
 And ye lifted up your head, and it seemed  
 as if He said,  
 'My Belovèd, is it so?  
 Have ye tasted of my woe?  
 Of my Heaven ye shall not fail!'—  
 He stands brightly where the shade is,  
 With the keys of Death and Hades,  
 And there, ends the mournful tale.—  
 So hopefully ye think upon the Dead.

## NIGHT AND THE MERRY MAN

## NIGHT

'NEATH my moon what doest thou,  
 With a somewhat paler brow  
 Than she giveth to the ocean?  
 He, without a pulse or motion,  
 Muttering low before her stands,  
 Lifting his invoking hands,  
 Like a seer before a sprite,  
 To catch her oracles of light.  
 But thy soul out-trembles now  
 Many pulses on thy brow!  
 Where be all thy laughers clear,  
 Others laughed alone to hear?

Where, thy quaint jests, said for fame?  
Where, thy dances, mixed with game?  
Where, thy festive companies,  
Moonèd o'er with ladies' eyes,  
All more bright for thee, I trow?  
'Neath my moon, what doest thou?

## THE MERRY MAN

I am digging my warm heart,  
Till I find its coldest part;  
I am digging wide and low,  
Further than a spade will go;  
Till that, when the pit is deep  
And large enough, I there may heap  
All my present pain and past  
Joy, dead things that look aghast  
By the daylight.—Now 'tis done.  
Throw them in, by one and one!  
I must laugh, at rising sun.

Memories—of fancy's golden  
Treasures which my hands have holden,  
Till the chillness made them ache;  
Of childhood's hopes, that used to wake  
If birds were in a singing strain,  
And for less cause, sleep again;  
Of the moss-seat in the wood,  
Where I trusted solitude;  
Of the hill-top, where the wind  
Used to follow me behind,  
Then in sudden rush to blind  
Both my glad eyes with my hair,  
Taken gladly in the snare;  
Of the climbing up the rocks,—  
Of the playing 'neath the oaks,  
Which retain beneath them now  
Only shadow of the bough;  
Of the lying on the grass  
While the clouds did overpass,  
Only they, so lightly driven,  
Seeming betwixt me and Heaven!  
Of the little prayers serene,  
Murmuring of earth and sin  
Of large-leaved philosophy  
Leaning from my childish knee;  
Of poetic book sublime,  
Soul-kissed for the first dear time,—  
Greek or English,—ere I knew  
Life was not a poem too.  
Throw them in, by one and one!  
I must laugh, at rising sun.

Of the glorious ambitions,  
Yet unquenched by their fruitions;  
Of the reading out the nights;  
Of the straining at mad heights;  
Of achievements, less described  
By a dear few, than magnified;  
Of praises, from the many earned,  
When praise from love was undiscerned;  
Of the sweet reflecting gladness,  
Softened by itself to sadness.—  
Throw them in, by one and one!  
I must laugh, at rising sun.

What are these? more, more than these!  
Throw in, dearer memories!—  
Of voices—whereof but to speak,  
Makes mine own all sunk and weak;  
Of smiles, the thought of which is  
sweeping  
All my soul to floods of weeping;  
Of looks, whose absence fain would weigh  
My looks to the ground for aye;  
Of clasping hands—ah me! I wring  
Mine, and in a tremble fling  
Downward, downward, all this paining!  
Partings, with the sting remaining;  
Meetings, with a deeper throe,  
Since the joy is ruined so;  
Changes, with a fiery burning—  
(Shadows upon all the turning);  
Thoughts of—with a storm they came—  
*Them*, I have not breath to name.  
Downward, downward, be they cast  
In the pit! and now at last  
My work beneath the moon is done,  
And I shall laugh, at rising sun.

But let me pause or ere I cover  
All my treasures darkly over.  
I will speak not in thine ears,  
Only tell my beaded tears  
Silently, most silently!  
When the last is calmly told,  
Let that same moist rosary  
With the rest sepulchred be.  
Finished now. The darksome mould  
Sealeth up the darksome pit.  
I will lay no stone on it:  
Grasses I will sow instead,  
Fit for Queen Titania's tread;  
Flowers, encoloured with the sun,  
And *ai ai* written upon none.

Thus, whenever saileth by  
The Lady World of dainty eye,  
Not a grief shall here remain,  
Silken shoon to damp or stain;  
And while she lisps, "I have not seen  
Any place more smooth and clean" . . .  
Here she cometh!—Ha, ha!—who  
Laughs as loud as I can do!

## EARTH AND HER PRAISERS

### I

THE Earth is old;  
Six thousand winters make her heart a-  
cold;  
Thesceptreslanteth from her palsied hold.  
She saith, "Las me!—God's word that  
I was "good"

Is taken back to heaven,  
From whence when any sound comes, I  
am riven  
By some sharp bolt. And now no angel  
would

Descend with sweet dew-silence on my  
mountains,

To glorify the lovely river-fountains  
That gush along their side.

I see, O weary change! I see instead

This human wrath and pride,  
These thrones, and tombs, judicial wrong,  
and blood,

And bitter words are poured upon mine  
head—

"O Earth! thou art a stage for tricks  
unholy,

A church for most remorseful melancholy!  
Thou art so spoilt, we should forget we had  
An Eden in thee,—wert thou not so sad."  
Sweet children, I am old! ye, every one,  
Do keep me from a portion of my sun.

Give praise in change for brightness!  
That I may shake my hills in infiniteness  
Of breezy laughter, as in youthful mirth,  
To hear Earth's sons and daughters  
praising Earth.'

### II

Whereupon a child began,  
With spirit running up to man,  
As by angel's shining ladder  
(May he find no cloud above!),

Seeming he had ne'er been sadder  
All his days than now,—  
Sitting in the chestnut grove,  
With that joyous overflow  
Of smiling from his mouth, o'er brow  
And cheek and chin, as if the breeze  
Leaning tricky from the treces  
To part his golden hairs, had blown  
Into an hundred smiles that one.

### III

'O rare, rare Earth!' he saith,  
'I will praise thee presently;  
Not to-day; I have no breath!  
I have hunted squirrels three—  
Two ran down in the furzy hollow,  
Where I could not see nor follow;  
One sits at the top of the filbert-tree,  
With a yellow nut, and a mock at me:  
Presently it shall be done.  
When I see which way those two  
have run;  
When the mocking one at the filbert-top  
Shall leap a-down, and beside me stop;  
Then, rare Earth, rare Earth,  
Will I pause, having known thy worth,  
To say all good of thee!'

### IV

Next a lover, with a dream  
'Neath his waking eyelids hidden,  
And a frequent sigh unbidden,  
And an idlesse all the day  
Beside a wandering stream,  
And a silence that is made  
Of a word he dares not say,—  
Shakes slow his pensive head.  
'Earth, Earth!' saith he,  
'If spirits, like thy roses, grew  
On one stalk, and winds austere  
Could but only blow them near,  
To share each other's dew!  
If, when summer rains agree  
To beautify thy hills, I knew  
Looking off them I might see  
Some one very beauteous too,—  
Then Earth,' saith he,  
'I would praise . . . nay, nay—not thee.'

### V

Will the pedant name her next?  
Crabbèd with a crabbèd text,  
Sits he in his study nook,  
With his elbow on a book,

And with stately crossed knees,  
 And a wrinkle deeply thrird  
 Through his lowering brow,  
 Caused by making proofs enow  
 That Plato in 'Parmenides'  
 Meant the same Spinosà did,—  
 Or, that an hundred of the groping  
 Like himself, had made one Homer,  
*Homeròs* being a misnomer.  
 What hath *he* to do with praise  
 Of Earth, or aught? Whene'er the  
     sloping  
 Sunbeams through his window daze  
 His eyes off from the learned phrase,  
 Straightway he draws close the curtain.  
 May abstraction keep him dumb!  
 Were his lips to ope, 'tis certain  
*Derivatum est* would come.

## VI

Then a mourner moveth pale  
 In a silence full of wail,  
 Raising not his sunken head  
 Because he wandered last that way  
 With that one beneath the clay:  
 Weeping not, because that one,  
 The only one who would have said,  
 'Cease to weep, beloved!' has gone  
 Whence returneth comfort none.  
 The silence breaketh suddenly,—  
 'Earth, I praise thee!' crieth he,  
 'Thou hast a grave for also *me*.'

## VII

Ha, a poet! know him by  
 The ecstasy-dilated eye,  
 Not uncharged with tears that ran  
 Upward from his heart of man;  
 By the cheek, from hour to hour,  
 Kindled bright or sunken wan  
 With a sense of lonely power;  
 By the brow uplifted higher  
 Than others, for more low declining;  
 By the lip which words of fire  
 Overboiling have burned white,  
 While they gave the nations light!  
 Aye, in every time and place  
 Ye may know the poet's face  
     By the shade, or shining.

## VIII

'Neath a golden cloud he stands,  
 Spreading his impassioned hands.

'O God's Earth!' he saith, 'the sign  
 From the Father-soul to mine  
 Of all beauteous mysteries,  
 Of all perfect images,  
 Which, divine in His divine,  
 In my human only are  
 Very excellent and fair!—  
 Think not, Earth, that I would raise  
 Weary forehead in thy praise  
 (Weary, that I cannot go  
 Farther from thy region low)  
 If were struck no richer meanings  
 From thee than thyself. The leanings  
 Of the close trees o'er the brim  
 Of a sunshine-haunted stream,  
 Have a sound beneath their leaves,  
     Not of wind, not of wind,  
 Which the poet's voice achieves:  
 The faint mountains, heaped behind,  
 Have a falling on their tops,

Not of dew, not of dew,  
 Which the poet's fancy drops,  
 Viewless things his eyes can view;  
 Driftings of his dream do light  
 All the skies by day and night,  
 And the seas that deepest roll  
 Carry murmurs of his soul.  
 Earth, I praise thee! praise thou *me*!  
 God perfecteth His creation  
 With this recipient poet-passion,  
 And makes the beautiful to be.  
 I praise thee, O beloved sign,  
 From the God-soul unto mine!  
 Praise me, that I cast on thee  
 The cunning sweet interpretation,  
 The help and glory and dilation  
     Of mine immortality!'

## IX

There was silence. None did dare  
 To use again the spoken air  
 Of that far-charming voice, until  
 A Christian resting on the hill,  
 With a thoughtful smile subdued  
 (Seeming learnt in solitude)  
 Which a weeper might have viewed  
 Without new tears, did softly say.  
 And looked up unto heaven alway  
 While he praised the Earth—

'O Earth,  
 I count the praises thou art worth,  
 By thy waves that move aloud,  
 By thy hills against the cloud,

By thy valleys warm and green,  
By the copses' elms between,  
By their birds which, like a sprite  
Scattered by a strong delight  
Into fragments musical,  
Stir and sing in every bush;  
By thy silver founts that fall,  
'As if to entice the stars at night  
To thine heart; by grass and rush,  
And little weeds the children pull,  
Mistook for flowers!

—Oh, beautiful  
Art thou, Earth, albeit worse  
Than in heaven is called good!  
Good to us, that we may know  
Meekly from thy good to go;  
While the holy, crying Blood,  
Puts its music kind and low  
'Twixt such ears as are not dull,  
And thine ancient curse!

## x

'Praised be the mosses soft  
In thy forest pathways oft,  
And the thorns, which make us think  
Of the thornless river-brink,  
Where the ransomed tread;  
Praised be thy sunny gleams,  
And the storm, that worketh dreams  
Of calm unfinished;  
Praised be thine active days,  
And thy night-time's solemn need,  
When in God's dear book we read  
*No night shall be therein*;  
Praised be thy dwellings warm  
By household faggot's cheerful blaze,  
Where, to hear of pardoned sin,  
Pauseth oft the merry din,  
Save the babe's upon the arm,  
Who croweth to the crackling wood;  
Yea,—and, better understood,  
Praised be thy dwellings cold,  
Hid beneath the churchyard mould,  
Where the bodies of the saints,  
Separate from earthly taints,  
Lie asleep, in blessing bound,  
Waiting for the trumpet's sound  
To free them into blessing;—none  
Weeping more beneath the sun,  
Though dangerous words of human  
love  
Be graven very near, above.

## xi

'Earth, we Christians praise thee thus,  
Even for the change that comes,  
With a grief, from thee to us!  
For thy cradles and thy tombs,  
For the pleasant corn and wine,  
And summer-heat; and also for  
The frost upon the sycamore,  
And hail upon the vine!'

THE VIRGIN MARY TO THE  
CHILD JESUS

But see the Virgin blest  
Hath laid her babe to rest.  
*MILTON'S Hymn on the Nativity.*

SLEEP, sleep, mine Holy One!  
My flesh, my Lord!—what name? I do  
not know  
A name that seemeth not too high or low,  
Too far from me or heaven.  
My Jesus, *that* is best! that word being  
given  
By the majestic angel whose command  
Was softly as a man's beseeching said,  
When I and all the earth appeared to stand  
In the great overflow  
Of light celestial from his wings and head.  
Sleep, sleep, my saving One!

## ii

And art Thou come for saving, baby-  
browed  
And speechless Being—art Thou come  
for saving?  
The palm that grows beside our door is  
bowed  
By treadings of the low wind from the  
south,  
A restless shadow through the chamber  
waving:  
Upon its bough a bird sings in the sun;  
But Thou, with that close slumber on  
Thy mouth,  
Dost seem of wind and sun already weary.  
Art come for saving. O my weary One!

## iii

Perchance this sleep that shutteth out  
the dreary  
Earth-sounds and motions, opens on Thy  
soul  
High dreams on fire with God;

High songs that make the pathways  
where they roll  
More bright than stars do theirs; and  
visions new  
Of Thine eternal Nature's old abode.  
Suffer this mother's kiss,  
Best thing that earthly is,  
To glide the music and the glory through,  
Nor narrow in Thy dream the broad up-  
liftings  
Of any seraph wing.  
Thus noiseless, thus. Sleep, sleep, my  
dreaming One!

## iv

The slumber of His lips meseems to run  
Through *my* lips to mine heart,—to all  
its shiftings  
Of sensual life, bringing contrariousness  
In a great calm. I feel I could lie  
down  
As Moses did, and die<sup>1</sup>,—and then live  
most.  
I am 'ware of you, heavenly Presences,  
That stand with your peculiar light un-  
lost,  
Each forehead with a high thought for  
a crown,  
Unsunned i' the sunshine! I am 'ware.  
Ye throw  
No shade against the wall! How motion-  
less  
Ye round me with your living statuary,  
While through your whiteness, in and  
outwardly,  
Continual thoughts of God appear to go,  
Like light's soul in itself. I bear, I bear,  
To look upon the dropt lids of your eyes,  
Though their external shining testifies  
To that beatitude within, which were  
Enough to blast an eagle at his sun.  
I fall not on my sad clay face before ye,—  
I look on His. I know  
My spirit which dilateth with the woe  
Of His mortality  
May well contain your glory.  
Yea, drop your lids more low.  
Ye are but fellow-worshippers with me!  
Sleep, sleep, my worshipped One!

<sup>1</sup> It is a Jewish tradition that Moses died of the kisses of God's lips.

## v

We sate among the stalls at Bethlehem.  
The dumb kine from their fodder turn-  
ing them,  
Softened their horn'd faces  
To almost human gazes  
Toward the newly Born:  
The simple shepherds from the star-lit  
brooks  
Brought visionary looks,  
As yet in their astounded hearing rung  
The strange, sweet angel-tongue:  
The magi of the East, in sandals worn,  
Knelt reverent, sweeping round,  
With long pale beards, their gifts upon the  
ground,  
The incense, myrrh, and gold  
These baby hands were impotent to hold.  
So, let all earthlies and celestials wait  
Upon Thy royal state.  
Sleep, sleep, my kingly One!

## vi

I am not proud—meek angels, ye invest  
New meeknesses to hear such utterance  
rest  
On mortal lips,—‘I am not proud’—*not*  
*proud!*  
Albeit in my flesh God sent His Son,  
Albeit over Him my head is bowed  
As others bow before Him, still mine  
heart  
Bows lower than their knees. O centuries  
That roll, in vision, your futurities  
My future grave athwart,—  
Whose murmurs seem to reach me while  
I keep  
Watch o'er this sleep,—  
Say of me as the Heavenly said—‘Thou  
art  
The blesseddest of women!’—blessedest,  
Not holiest, not noblest—no high name,  
Whose height misplaced may pierce me  
like a shame,  
When I sit meek in heaven!  
For me, for me,  
God knows that I am feeble like the  
rest!—  
I often wandered forth, more child than  
maiden,  
Among the midnight hills of Galilee  
Whose summits looked heaven-laden,

Listening to silence as it seemed to be  
 God's voice, so soft yet strong—so fain to  
     press  
 Upon my heart as heaven did on the  
     height,  
 And waken up its shadows by a light,  
 And show its vileness by a holiness.  
 Then I knelt down most silent like the  
     night,  
     Too self-renounced for fears,  
 Raising my small face to the boundless  
     blue  
 Whose stars did mix and tremble in my  
     tears  
 God heard *them* falling after—with His  
     dew.

## VII

So, seeing my corruption, can I see  
 This incorruptible now born of me,  
 This fair new Innocence no sun did chance  
 To shine on (for even Adam was no child),  
 Created from my nature all defiled,  
 This mystery, from out mine ignorance,—  
 Nor feel the blindness, stain, corruption,  
     more  
 Than others do, or I did heretofore?—  
 Can hands wherein such burden pure has  
     been,  
 Not open with the cry 'unclean, unclean,'  
 More oft than any else beneath the skies?  
     Ah King, ah Christ, ah son!  
 The kine, the shepherds, the basèd wise,  
     Must all less lowly wait  
     Than I, upon thy state,—  
 Sleep, sleep, my kingly One!

## VIII

Art Thou a King, then! Come, His  
     universe,  
 Come, crown me Him a King!  
 Pluck rays from all such stars as never fling  
 Their light where fell a curse,  
 And make a crowning for this kingly  
     brow!—  
 What is my word?—Each empyreal star  
     Sits in a sphere afar  
     In shining ambuscade.  
 The child-brow, crowned by none,  
 Keeps its unchildlike shade.  
 Sleep, sleep, my crownless One!

## IX

Unchildlike shade!—No other babe doth  
     wear  
 An aspect very sorrowful, as Thou.—  
 No small babe-smiles, my watching heart  
     has seen,  
 To float like speech the speechless lips  
     between:  
 No dovelike cooing in the golden air,  
 No quick short joys of leaping babyhood.  
     Alas, our earthly good  
 In heaven thought evil, seems too good for  
     Thee:  
 Yet, sleep, my weary One!

## X

And then the drear sharp tongue of  
     prophecy,  
 With the dread sense of things which shall  
     be done,  
 Doth smite me inly, like a sword! a  
     sword!—  
 (*That 'smites the Shepherd.'*) Then, I  
     think aloud  
 The words 'despised,'—'rejected,'—  
     every word  
 Recoiling into darkness as I view  
     The DARLING on my knee.  
 Bright angels,—move not!—lest ye stir  
     the cloud  
 Betwixt my soul and His futurity!  
 I must not die, with mother's work  
     to do,  
 And could not live—and see.

## XI

It is enough to bear  
 This image still and fair—  
 This holier in sleep,  
 Than a saint at prayer;  
 This aspect of a child  
 Who never sinned or smiled;  
 This Presence in an infant's face,  
 This sadness most like love,  
 This love than love more deep,  
 This weakness like omnipotence  
 It is so strong to move.  
 Awful is this watching place.  
 Awful what I see from hence—  
 A king, without regalia,  
 A God, without the thunder,

A child, without the heart for play;  
Aye, a Creator, rent asunder  
From His first glory and cast away  
On His own world, for me alone  
To hold in hands created, crying—Son!

## XII

That tear fell not on Thee,  
Beloved, yet Thou stirrest in Thy slumber!  
Thou, stirring not for glad sounds out of  
number  
Which through the vibratory palm-trees  
run  
From summer wind and bird,  
So quickly hast Thou heard  
A tear fall silently?  
Wak'st Thou, O loving One?

## AN ISLAND

All goeth but Goddis will.—OLD POET.

## I

My dream is of an island place  
Which distant seas keep lonely,  
A little island, on whose face  
The stars are watchers only.  
Those bright still stars! they need not  
seem  
Brighter or stiller in my dream.

## II

An island full of hills and dells,  
All rumpled and uneven  
With green recesses, sudden swells,  
And odorous valleys driven  
So deep and straight, that always there  
The wind is cradled to soft air.

## III

Hills running up to heaven for light  
Through woods that half-way ran!  
As if the wild earth mimicked right  
The wilder heart of man:  
Only it shall be greener far  
And gladder than hearts ever are.

## IV

More like, perhaps, that mountain piece  
Of Dante's paradise,  
Disrupt to an hundred hills like these,  
In falling from the skies;  
Bringing within it, all the roots  
Of heavenly trees and flowers and fruits.

## V

For saving where the grey rocks strike  
Their javelins up the azure,  
Or where deep fissures, miser-like,  
Hoard up some fountain treasure  
(And e'en in them—stoop down and  
hear—  
Leaf sounds with water in your ear!),

## VI

The place is all awave with trees,  
Limes, myrtles purple-beaded,  
Acacias having drunk the lees  
Of the night-dew, faint-headed,  
And wan, grey olive-woods, which seem  
The fittest foliage for a dream.

## VII

Trees, trees on all sides! they combine  
Their plummy shades to throw;  
Through whose clear fruit and blossom  
fine  
Whene'er the sun may go,  
The ground beneath he deeply stains,  
As passing through cathedral-panes.

## VIII

But little needs this earth of ours  
That shining from above her,  
When many Pleiades of flowers  
(Not one lost) star her over,  
The rays of their unnumbered hues  
Being all refracted by the dews.

## IX

Wide-petalled plants, that boldly drink  
The Amreeta of the sky;  
Shut bells, that dull with rapture sink;  
And lolling buds, half shy:  
I cannot count them, but between,  
Is room for grass and mosses green,

## X

And brooks, that glass in different  
strengths  
All colours in disorder,  
Or gathering up their silver lengths  
Beside their winding border,  
Sleep, haunted through the slumber  
hidden,  
By lilies white as dreams in Eden.

## XI

Nor think each archèd tree with each  
Too closely interlaces,  
To admit of vistas out of reach,  
And broad moon-lighted places,  
Upon whose sward the antlered deer  
May view their double image clear.

## XII

For all this island's creature-full  
(Kept happy not by halves),  
Mild cows, that at the vine-wreaths pull,  
Then low back at their calves  
With tender lowings, to approve  
The warm mouths milking them for love.

## XIII

Free gamesome horses, antelopes,  
And harmless leaping leopards,  
And buffaloes upon the slopes,  
And sheep unrulèd by shepherds;  
Hares, lizards, hedgehogs, badgers, mice,  
Snakes, squirrels, frogs, and butterflies.

## XIV

And birds that live there in a crowd,  
Horned owls, rapt nightingales,  
Larks bold with heaven, and peacocks  
proud,  
Self-sphered in those grand tails;  
All creatures glad and safe, I deem.  
No guns nor springs in my dream!

## XV

The island's edges are a-wing  
With trees that overbranch  
The sea with song-birds welcoming  
The curlews to green change;  
And doves from half-closed lids espy  
The red and purple fish go by.

## XVI

One dove is answering in trust  
The water every minute,  
Thinking so soft a murmur must  
Have her mate's cooing in it:  
So softly doth earth's beauty round  
Infuse itself in ocean's sound.

## XVII

My sanguine soul bounds forwarder  
To meet the bounding waves;  
Beside them straightway I repair,  
To live within the caves;

And near me two or three may dwell  
Whom dreams fantastic please as well.

## XVIII

Long winding caverns, glittering far  
Into a crystal distance!  
Through clefts of which, shall many a star  
Shine clear without resistance,  
And carry down its rays the smell  
Of flowers above invisible.

## XIX

I said that two or three might choose  
Their dwelling near mine own:  
Those who would change man's voice  
and use,  
For Nature's way and tone—  
Man's veering heart and careless eyes,  
For Nature's steadfast sympathies.

## XX

Ourselves, to meet her faithfulness,  
Shall play a faithful part:  
Her beautiful shall ne'er address  
The monstrous at our heart;  
Her musical shall ever touch  
Something within us also such.

## XXI

Yet shall she not our mistress live,  
As doth the moon of ocean,  
Though gently as the moon she give  
Our thoughts a light and motion:  
More like a harp of many lays,  
Moving its master while he plays.

## XXII

No sod in all that island doth  
Yawn open for the dead;  
No wind hath borne a traitor's oath;  
No earth, a mourner's tread:  
We cannot say by stream or shade,  
'I suffered *here*,—was *here* betrayed.'

## XXIII

Our only 'farewell' we shall laugh  
To shifting cloud or hour,  
And use our only epitaph  
To some bud turned a flower;  
Our only tears shall serve to prove  
Excess in pleasure or in love.

## XXIV

Our fancies shall their plumage catch  
From fairest island birds,  
Whose eggs let young ones out at hatch,  
Born singing! then our words  
Unconsciously shall take the dyes  
Of those prodigious fantasies.

## XXV

Yea, soon, no consonant unsmooth  
Our smile-tuned lips shall reach;  
Sounds sweet as Hellas spake in youth  
Shall glide into our speech.  
(What music, certes, can you find  
As soft as voices which are kind?)

## XXVI

And often, by the joy without  
And in us, overcome,  
We, through our musing, shall let float  
Such poems,—sitting dumb,—  
As Pindar might have writ, if he  
Had tended sheep in Arcady;

## XXVII

Or Aeschylus—the pleasant fields  
He died in, longer knowing;  
Or Homer, had men's sins and shields  
Been lost in Meles flowing;  
Or Poet Plato, had the undim  
Unsetting Godlight broke on him.

## XXVIII

Choose me the cave most worthy choice  
To make a place for prayer,  
And I will choose a praying voice  
To pour our spirits there.  
How silverly the echoes run—  
*Thy will be done,—Thy will be done.*

## XXIX

Gently yet strangely uttered words!—  
They lift me from my dream:  
The island fadeth with its swards  
That did no more than seem:  
The streams are dry, no sun could find—  
The fruits are fallen, without wind.

## XXX

So oft the doing of God's will  
Our foolish wills undoeth!  
And yet what idle dream breaks ill  
Which morning-light subdueth?  
And who would murmur and misdoubt  
When God's great sunrise finds him out?

## THE SOUL'S TRAVELLING

\**Ἡδὴ ποσειδῶς*

*Περὰ δὲ τῆς ταπεινότητος.*—SYNESIUS.

## I

I DWELL amid the city ever.  
The great humanity which beats  
Its life along the stony streets,  
Like a strong and unsunned river  
In a self-made course,  
I sit and hearken while it rolls.  
Very sad and very hoarse,  
Certes, is the flow of souls:  
Infinetest tendencies  
By the finite prest and pent,  
In the finite, turbulent,  
How we tremble in surprise,  
When sometimes, with an awful sound,  
God's great plummet strikes the ground!

## II

The champ of the steeds on the silver  
bit,  
As they whirl the rich man's carriage by;  
The beggar's whine as he looks at it,—  
But it goes too fast for charity;  
The trail on the street of the poor man's  
broom,  
That the lady who walks to her palace-  
home,  
On her silken skirt may catch no dust;  
The tread of the business-men who must  
Count their per-cents by the paces they  
take;  
The cry of the babe unheard of its mother  
Though it lie on her breast, while she  
thinks of the other  
Laid yesterday where it will not wake;  
The flower-girl's prayer to buy roses  
and pinks,  
Held out in the smoke, like stars by day;  
The gin-door's oath that hollowly chinks  
Guilt upon grief and wrong upon hate;  
The cabman's cry to get out of the way  
The dustman's call down the area-grate,  
The young maid's jest, and the old wife's  
scold,  
The haggling talk of the boys at a stall,  
The fight in the street which is backed  
for gold,

The plea of the lawyers in Westminster  
Hall ;

The drop on the stones of the blind  
man's staff

As he trades in his own grief's sacredness ;  
The brothel shriek, and the Newgate  
laugh,

The hum upon 'Change, and the organ's  
grinding—

The grinder's face being nevertheless  
Dry and vacant of even woe,  
While the children's hearts are leaping so  
At the merry music's winding ;  
The black-plumed funeral's creeping train,  
Long and slow (and yet they will go  
As fast as Life, though it hurry and strain),  
Creeping the populous houses through,  
And nodding their plumes at either side,—  
At many a house where an infant, new  
To the sunshiny world, has just struggled  
and cried,—

At many a house, where sitteth a bride  
Trying to-morrow's coronals

With a scarlet blush to-day :

Slowly creep the funerals,  
As none should hear the noise and say,  
'The living, the living, must go away  
To multiply the dead.'

Hark ! an upward shout is sent !

In grave strong joy from tower to steeple  
The bells ring out—

The trumpets sound, the people shout,  
The young queen goes to her Parliament.  
She turneth round her large blue eyes,  
More bright with childish memories  
Than royal hopes, upon the people :  
On either side she bows her head

Lowly, with a queenly grace,  
And smile most trusting-innocent,  
As if she smiled upon her mother ;  
The thousands press before each other  
To bless her to her face ;

And booms the deep majestic voice  
Through trumpet and drum,—'May the  
queen rejoice

In the people's liberties !'—

### III

I dwell amid the city,  
And hear the flow of souls in act and  
speech,  
For pomp or trade, for merrymake or  
folly ;

I hear the confluence and sum of each,  
And that is melancholy !—  
Thy voice is a complaint, O crowned city,  
The blue sky covering thee like God's  
great pity.

### IV

O blue sky ! it mindeth me  
Of places where I used to see  
Its vast unbroken circle thrown  
From the far pale-peaked hill  
Out to the last verge of ocean,  
As by God's arm it were done  
Then for the first time, with the emotion  
Of that first impulse on it still.  
Oh, we spirits fly at will,  
Faster than the winged steed  
Whereof in old book we read,  
With the sunlight foaming back  
From his flanks to a misty wrack,  
And his nostril reddening proud  
As he breasteth the steep thundercloud,—  
Smoother than Sabrina's chair  
Gliding up from wave to air,  
While she smileth debonaire  
Yet holy, coldly and yet brightly,  
Like her own mooned waters nightly,  
Through her dripping hair.

### V

Very fast and smooth we fly,  
Spirits, though the flesh be by.  
All looks feed not from the eye,  
Nor all hearings from the ear ;  
We can hearken and espy  
Without either ; we can journey  
Bold and gay as knight to tourney,  
And though we wear no visor down  
To dark our countenance, the foe  
Shall never chafe us as we go.

### VI

I am gone from peopled town !  
It passeth its street-thunder round  
My body which yet hears no sound ;  
For now another sound, another  
Vision, my soul's senses have—  
O'er a hundred valleys deep,  
Where the hills' green shadows sleep  
Scarce known (because the valley-trees  
Cross those upland images),  
O'er a hundred hills, each other  
Watching to the western wave,

I have travelled,—I have found  
The silent, lone, remembered ground.

## VII

I have found a grassy niche  
Hollowed in a seaside hill,  
As if the ocean-grandeur which  
Is aspectable from the place  
Had struck the hill as with a mace  
Sudden and cleaving. You might fill  
That little nook with the little cloud  
Which sometimes lieth by the moon  
To beautify a night of June.  
A cavelike nook, which, opening all  
To the wide sea, is disallowed  
From its own earth's sweet pastoral;  
Cavelike, but roofless overhead,  
And made of verdant banks instead  
Of any rocks, with flowerets spread,  
Instead of spar and stalactite,  
Cowslips and daisies, gold and white:  
Such pretty flowers on such greensward,  
You think the sea they look toward  
Doth serve them for another sky  
As warm and blue as that on high.

## VIII

And in this hollow is a seat,  
And when you shall have crept to it,  
Slipping down the banks too steep  
To be o'erbrowsèd by the sheep,  
Do not think—though at your feet  
The cliff's disrupt—you shall behold  
The line where earth and ocean meet.  
You sit too much above to view  
The solemn confluence of the two:  
You can hear them as they greet;  
You can hear that evermore  
Distance-softened noise, more old  
Than Nereid's singing,—the tide spent  
Joining soft issues with the shore  
In harmony of discontent,—  
And when you hearken to the grave  
Lamenting of the underwave,  
You must believe in earth's communion,  
Albeit you witness not the union.

## IX

Except that sound, the place is full  
Of silences, which when you cull  
By any word, it thrills you so  
That presently you let them grow

To meditation's fullest length  
Across your soul with a soul's strength  
And as they touch your soul, they borrow  
Both of its grandeur and its sorrow,  
That deathly odour which the clay  
Leaves on its deathlessness away.

## X

Always! always! must this be?  
Rapid Soul from city gone,  
Dost thou carry inwardly  
What doth make the city's moan?  
Must this deep sigh of thine own  
Haunt thee with humanity?  
Green-visioned banks that are too steep  
To be o'erbrowsèd by the sheep,  
May all sad thoughts adown you creep  
Without a shepherd!—Mighty sea,  
Can we dwarf thy magnitude,  
And fit it to our straitest mood!—  
O fair, fair Nature! are we thus  
Impotent and querulous  
Among thy workings glorious,  
Wealth and sanctities,—that still  
Leave us vacant and defiled,  
And waiting like a soft-kissed child,  
Kissed soft against his will?

## XI

God, God!  
With a child's voice I cry,  
Weak, sad, confindingly—  
God, God!  
Thou knowest, eyelids, raised not  
always up  
Unto Thy love (as none of ours are), droop  
As ours, o'er many a tear!  
Thou knowest, though Thy universe is  
broad,  
Two little tears suffice to cover all:  
Thou knowest, thou, who art so prodigal  
Of beauty, we are oft but stricken deer  
Expiring in the woods—that care for none  
Of those delightful flowers they die  
upon.

## XII

O blissful Mouth which breathed the  
mournful breath  
We name our souls, self-spoilt!—by  
that strong passion  
Which paled Thee once with sighs,—by  
that strong death

Which made Thee once unbreathing—  
 from the wrack  
 Themselves have called around them,  
 call them back,  
 Back to Thee in continuous aspiration !  
 For here, O Lord,  
 For here they travel vainly,—vainly pass  
 From city pavement to untrodden sward,  
 Where the lark finds her deep nest in  
 the grass  
 Cold with the earth's last dew. Yea,  
 very vain  
 The greatest speed of all these souls of  
 men,  
 Unless they travel upward to the throne,  
 Where sittest THOU, the satisfying ONE,  
 With help for sins and holy perfectings  
 For all requirements—while the arch-  
 angel, raising  
 Unto Thy face his full ecstatic gazing,  
 Forgets the rush and rapture of his wings.

## TO BETTINE

## THE CHILD-FRIEND OF GOETHE

I have the second sight, Goethe!  
*Letters of a Child.*

## I

BETTINE, friend of Goethe,  
*Hadst* thou the second sight—  
 Upturning worship and delight  
 With such a loving duty  
 To his grand face, as women will,  
 The childhood 'neath thine eyelids still ?

## II

Before his shrine to doom thee,  
 Using the same child's smile  
 That heaven and earth, beheld erewhile  
 For the first time, won from thee,  
 Ere star and flower grew dim and dead,  
 Save at his feet and o'er his head ?

## III

Digging thine heart and throwing  
 Away its childhood's gold,  
 That so its woman-depth might hold  
 His spirit's overflowing ?

For surging souls, no worlds can bound,  
 Their channel in the heart have found.

## IV

O child, to change appointed,  
 Thou hadst not second sight !  
 What eyes the future view aright,  
 Unless by tears anointed ?  
 Yea, only tears themselves can show  
 The burning ones that have to flow.

## V

O woman, deeply loving,  
 Thou hadst not second sight !  
 The star is very high and bright,  
 And none can see it moving.  
 Love looks around, below, above,  
 Yet all his prophecy is—love.

## VI

The bird thy childhood's playing  
 Sent onward o'er the sea,  
 Thy dove of hope came back to thee  
 Without a leaf. Art laying  
 Its wet cold wing no sun can dry,  
 Still in thy bosom secretly ?

## VII

Our Goethe's friend, Bettine,  
 I have the second sight !  
 The stone upon his grave is white,  
 The funeral stone between ye ;  
 And in thy mirror thou hast viewed  
 Some change as hardly understood.

## VIII

Where's childhood? where is Goethe?  
 The tears are in thine eyes.  
 Nay, thou shalt yet reorganize  
 Thy maidenhood of beauty  
 In his own glory, which is smooth  
 Of wrinkles and sublime in youth.

## IX

The poet's arms have wound thee,  
 He breathes upon thy brow,  
 He lifts thee upward in the glow  
 Of his great genius round thee,—  
 The childlike poet undefiled  
 Preserving evermore THE CHILD.

## MAN AND NATURE

A SAD man on a summer day  
Did look upon the earth and say—

'Purple cloud, the hill-top binding,  
Folded hills, the valleys wind in,  
Valleys, with fresh streams among you,  
Streams, with bosky trees along you,  
Trees, with many birds and blossoms,  
Birds, with music-trembling bosoms,  
Blossoms, dropping dew that wreathes  
you

To your fellow flowers beneath you,  
Flowers, that constellate on earth,  
Earth, that shakest to the mirth  
Of the merry Titan ocean,  
All his shining hair in motion!  
Why am I thus the only one  
Who can be dark beneath the sun?'

But when the summer day was past,  
He looked to heaven and smiled at last,  
Self-answered so—

'Because, O cloud,  
Pressing with thy crumpled shroud  
Heavily on mountain top,—  
Hills, that almost seem to drop,  
Stricken with a misty death  
To the valleys underneath,—  
Valleys, sighing with the torrent,—  
Waters, streaked with branches hor-  
rent,—

Branchless trees, that shake your head  
Wildly o'er your blossoms spread  
Where the common flowers are found,—  
Flowers, with foreheads to the ground,—  
Ground, that shrieketh while the sea  
With his iron smiteth thee—  
I am, besides, the only one  
Who can be bright *without* the sun.'

## A SEASIDE WALK

## I

WE walked beside the sea  
After a day which perished silently  
Of its own glory—like the princess weird  
Who, combating the Genius, scorched  
and seared,

Uttered with burning breath, 'Hail  
victory!'

And sank adown a heap of ashes pale.  
So runs the Arab tale.

## II

The sky above us showed  
A universal and unmoving cloud,  
On which the cliffs permitted us to see  
Only the outline of their majesty,  
As master-minds when gazed at by the  
crowd!

And, shining with a gloom, the water grey  
Swang in its moon-taught way.

## III

Nor moon nor stars were out:  
They did not dare to tread so soon about,  
Though trembling, in the footsteps of  
the sun;

The light was neither night's nor day's,  
but one

Which, life-like, had a beauty in its doubt,  
And Silence's impassioned breathings  
round

Seemed wandering into sound.

## IV

O solemn-beating heart  
Of nature! I have knowledge that thou art  
Bound unto man's by cords he cannot  
sever—

And, what time they are slackened by  
him ever,

So to attest his own supernal part,  
Still runneth thy vibration fast and strong  
The slackened cord along.

## V

For though we never spoke  
Of the grey water and the shaded rock,  
Dark wave and stone unconsciously were  
fused

Into the plaintive speaking that we used  
Of absent friends and memories unfor-  
sook;

And, had we seen each other's face, we  
had

Seen haply, each was sad.

## THE SEA-MEW

AFFECTIONATELY INSCRIBED TO  
M. E. H.

## I

How joyously the young sea-mew  
Lay dreaming on the waters blue,  
Whereon our little bark had thrown  
A little shade, the only one,—  
But shadows ever man pursue.

## II

Familiar with the waves and free  
As if their own white foam were he,  
His heart upon the heart of ocean  
Lay learning all its mystic motion,  
And throbbing to the throbbing sea.

## III

And such a brightness in his eye,  
As if the ocean and the sky  
Within him had lit up and nurst  
A soul God gave him not at first,  
To comprehend their majesty.

## IV

We were not cruel, yet did sunder  
His white wing from the blue waves  
under,  
And bound it, while his fearless eyes  
Shone up to ours in calm surprise,  
As deeming us some ocean wonder!

## V

We bore our ocean bird unto  
A grassy place, where he might view  
The flowers that curtsy to the bees,  
The waving of the tall green trees,  
The falling of the silver dew.

## VI

But flowers of earth were pale to him  
Who had seen the rainbow fishes swim;  
And when earth's dew around him lay  
He thought of ocean's winged spray,  
And his eye waxed sad and dim.

## VII

The green trees round him only made  
A prison with their darksome shade;  
And drooped his wing, and mourned he  
For his own boundless glittering sea—  
Albeit he knew not they could fade.

## VIII

Then One her glad some face did bring,  
Her gentle voice's murmuring,  
In ocean's stead his heart to move  
And teach him what was human love—  
He thought it a strange, mournful thing.

## IX

He lay down in his grief to die  
(First looking to the sea-like sky  
That hath no waves!), because, alas!  
Our human touch did on him pass,  
And with our touch, our agony.

## FELICIA HEMANS

TO L. E. L.<sup>1</sup>, REFERRING TO HER  
MONODY ON THE POETESS<sup>2</sup>

## I

Thou bay-crowned living One that o'er  
the bay-crowned Dead art bowing,  
And o'er the shadeless moveless brow  
the vital shadow throwing,  
And o'er the sighless songless lips the  
wail and music wedding,  
And dropping o'er the tranquil eyes,  
the tears not of their shedding!—

## II

Take music from the silent Dead, whose  
meaning is completer,  
Reserve thy tears for living brows,  
where all such tears are meeter,  
And leave the violets in the grass to  
brighten where thou treadest!  
No flowers for her! no need of flowers—  
albeit 'bring flowers,' thou saiest.

## III

Yes, flowers, to crown the 'cup and  
lute!' since both may come to  
breaking;  
Or flowers, to greet the 'bride!' the  
heart's own beating works its  
aching;  
Or flowers, to soothe the 'captive's'  
sight, from earth's free bosom  
gathered,  
Reminding of his earthly hope, then  
withering as it withered.

<sup>1</sup> Letitia Elizabeth Landon, 1802-38.

<sup>2</sup> Mrs. Hemans died 1835.

## IV

But bring not near the solemn corse,  
 a type of human seeming,  
 Lay only dust's stern verity upon the  
 dust undreaming;  
 And while the calm perpetual stars shall  
 look upon it solely,  
 Her spherèd soul shall look on *them*,  
 with eyes more bright and holy.

## V

Nor mourn, O living One, because her  
 part in life was mourning.  
 Would she have lost the poet's fire for  
 anguish of the burning?—  
 The minstrel harp, for the strained string?  
 the tripod, for the afflated  
 Woe! or the vision, for those tears in  
 which it shone dilated?

## VI

Perhaps she shuddered while the world's  
 cold hand her brow was wreathing,  
 But never wronged that mystic breath  
 which breathed in all her breath-  
 ing,  
 Which drew from rocky earth and man,  
 abstractions high and moving,  
 Beauty, if not the beautiful, and love, if  
 not the loving.

## VII

Such visionings have paled in sight;  
 the Saviour she descrieth,  
 And little reck's *who* wreathed the brow  
 which on His bosom lieth:  
 The whiteness of His innocence o'er all  
 her garments, flowing,  
 There, learneth she the sweet new song,  
 she will not mourn in knowing.

## VIII

Be happy, crowned and living One!  
 and, as thy dust decayeth,  
 May thine own England say for thee,  
 what now for Her it sayeth—  
 'Albeit softly in our ears her silver song  
 was ringing,  
 The footfall of her parting soul is softer  
 than her singing!'

## L. E. L.'S LAST QUESTION

Do you think of me as I think of you?  
*From her poem written during the  
 voyage to the Cape.*

## I

'Do you think of me as I think of you,  
 My friends, my friends?'—She said it  
 from the sea,  
 The English minstrel in her minstrelsy,  
 While, under brighter skies than erst  
 she knew,  
 Her heart grew dark, and groped there,  
 as the blind,  
 To reach across the waves friends left  
 behind—  
 'Do you think of me as I think of you?'

## II

It seemed not much to ask—as *I of you?*  
 We all do ask the same. No eyelids cover  
 Within the meekest eyes, that question  
 over.  
 And little in the world the Loving do  
 But sit (among the rocks?) and listen for  
 The echo of their own love evermore—  
 'Do you think of me as I think of you?'

## III

Love-learnèd she had sung of love and  
 love,—  
 And like a child that, sleeping with  
 dropt head  
 Upon the fairy-book he lately read,  
 Whatever household noises round him  
 move,  
 Hears in his dream some elfin turbu-  
 lence,—  
 Even so, suggestive to her inward sense,  
 All sounds of life assumed one tune of love.

## IV

And when the glory of her dream with-  
 drew,  
 When knightly gestic and courtly  
 pageantries  
 Were broken in her visionary eyes  
 By tears the solemn seas attested true,—  
 Forgetting that sweet lute beside her hand  
 She asked not, 'Do you praise me, O  
 my land?'—  
 But, 'Think ye of me, friends, as I of  
 you?'

## V

Hers was the hand that played for many  
a year  
Love's silver phrase for England,—  
smooth and well.  
Would God, her heart's more inward  
oracle  
In that lone moment might confirm her  
dear!  
For when her questioned friends in agony  
Made passionate response, 'We think of  
thee,'  
Her place was in the dust, too deep to  
hear.

## VI

Could she not wait to catch their answer-  
ing breath?  
Was she content, content, with ocean's  
sound,  
Which dashed its mocking infinite around  
One thirsty for a little love?—beneath  
Those stars content, where last her song  
had gone,—  
They mute and cold in radiant life,—as  
soon  
Their singer was to be, in darksome  
death!<sup>1</sup>

## VII

Bring your vain answers—cry, 'We  
think of thee!'  
How think ye of her? warm in long ago  
Delights?—or crowned with budding  
bays! Not so.  
None smile and none are crowned where  
lieth she,  
With all her visions unfulfilled save one,  
Her childhood's—of the palm-trees in  
the sun—  
And lo! their shadow on her sepulchre!

## VIII

'Do ye think of me as I think of you?'—  
O friends, O kindred, O dear brotherhood  
Of all the world! what are we, that we  
should  
For covenants of long affection sue?  
Why press so near each other when the  
touch  
Is barred by graves? Not much, and yet  
too much,  
Is this 'Think of me as I think of you.'

<sup>1</sup> Her lyric on the polar star came home with  
her latest papers.

## IX

But while on mortal lips I shape anew  
A sigh to mortal issues,—verily  
Above the unshaken stars that see us  
die,  
A vocal pathos rolls; and HE who drew  
All life from dust, and for all, tasted  
death,  
By death and life and love, appealing,  
saith,  
*Do you think of Me as I think of you?*

## CROWNED AND WEDDED

## I

WHEN last before her people's face her  
own fair face she bent,  
Within the meek projection of that  
shade she was content  
To erase the child-smile from her lips,  
which seemed as if it might  
Be still kept holy from the world to  
childhood still in sight—  
To erase it with a solemn vow,—a  
princely vow—to rule;  
A priestly vow—to rule by grace of God  
the pitiful;  
A very godlike vow—to rule in right and  
righteousness,  
And with the law and for the land!—so  
God the vower bless!

## II

The minster was alight that day, but  
not with fire, I ween,  
And long-drawn glitterings swept adown  
that mighty aisled scene;  
The priests stood stoled in their pomp,  
the sworded chiefs in theirs,  
And so, the collared knights, and so, the  
civil ministers,  
And so, the waiting lords and dames—  
and little pages best  
At holding trains—and legates so, from  
countries east and west.  
So, alien princes, native peers, and high-  
born ladies bright,  
Along whose brows the Queen's, new  
crowned, flashed coronets to light.

And so, the people at the gates, with  
 priestly hands on high,  
 Which bring the first anointing to all  
 legal majesty.  
 And so the DEAD—who lie in rows be-  
 neath the minster floor,  
 There, verily an awful state maintaining  
 evermore;  
 The statesman whose clean palm will  
 kiss no bribe, whate'er it be,  
 The courtier who, for no fair queen, will  
 rise up to his knee;  
 The court-dame who, for no court-tire,  
 will leave her shroud behind;  
 The laureate who no courtlier rime than  
 'dust to dust' can find;  
 The kings and queens who having made  
 that vow and worn that crown,  
 Descended unto lower thrones and  
 darker, deep adown!  
*Dieu et mon droit*—what is 't to them?—  
 what meaning can it have?—  
 The King of kings, the right of death—  
 God's judgement and the grave.  
 And when betwixt the quick and  
 dead, the young fair queen had  
 vowed,  
 The living shouted 'May she live!  
 Victoria, live!' aloud.  
 And as the loyal shouts went up, true  
 spirits prayed between,  
 'The blessings happy monarchs have,  
 be thine, O crownèd queen!'

## III

But now before her people's face she  
 bendeth her's anew,  
 And calls them, while she vows, to be  
 her witness thereunto.  
 She vowed to rule, and, in that oath,  
 her childhood put away:  
 She doth maintain her womanhood, in  
 vowing love to-day.  
 O lovely lady!—let her vow!—such  
 lips become such vows,  
 And fairer goeth bridal wreath than  
 crown with vernal brows.  
 O lovely lady!—let her vow!—yea, let  
 her vow to love!—  
 And though she be no less a queen—  
 with purples hung above,

The pageant of a court behind, the royal  
 kin around,  
 And woven gold to catch her looks turned  
 maidenly to ground,  
 Yet may the bride-veil hide from her  
 a little of that state,  
 While loving hopes, for retinues, about  
 her sweetness wait.  
 SHE vows to love who vowed to rule—  
 (the chosen at her side)  
 Let none say, 'God preserve the queen!'  
 —but rather, 'Bless the bride!'  
 None blow the trump, none bend the  
 knee, none violate the dream  
 Wherein no monarch but a wife, she to  
 herself may seem.  
 Or if ye say, 'Preserve the queen!'  
 —oh, breathe it inward low—  
 She is a *woman*, and *beloved*!—and 'tis  
 enough but so.  
 Count it enough, thou noble prince, who  
 tak'st her by the hand,  
 And claimest for thy lady-love, our lady  
 of the land!  
 And since, Prince Albert, men have called  
 thy spirit high and rare,  
 And true to truth and brave for truth, as  
 some at Augsburg were,—  
 We charge thee by thy lofty thoughts,  
 and by thy poet-mind  
 Which not by glory and degree takes  
 measure of mankind,  
 Esteem that wedded hand less dear for  
 sceptre than for ring,  
 And hold her uncrowned womanhood  
 to be the royal thing.

## IV

And now, upon our queen's last vow,  
 what blessings shall we pray?  
 None, straitened to a shallow crown,  
 will suit our lips to-day.  
 Behold, they must be free as love—they  
 must be broad as free,  
 Even to the borders of heaven's light  
 and earth's humanity.  
 Long live she!—send up loyal shouts—  
 and true hearts pray between,—  
 'The blessings happy PEASANTS have, be  
 thine, O crownèd queen!'

## CROWNED AND BURIED

## I

NAPOLEON!—years ago, and that great  
word  
Compact of human breath in hate and  
dread  
And exultation, skied us overhead—  
An atmosphere whose lightning was the  
sword  
Scathing the cedars of the world,—drawn  
down  
In burnings, by the metal of a crown.

## II

Napoleon! nations, while they cursed that  
name,  
Shook at their own curse; and while  
others bore  
Its sound, as of a trumpet, on before,  
Brass-fronted legions justified its fame;  
And dying men, on trampled battle-sods,  
Near their last silence, uttered it for  
God's.

## III

Napoleon! sages, with high foreheads  
drooped,  
Did use it for a problem: children small  
Leapt up to greet it, as at manhood's call:  
Priests blessed it from their altars  
overstooped  
By meek-eyed Christs,—and widows  
with a moan  
Spake it, when questioned why they sate  
alone.

## IV

That name consumed the silence of the  
snows  
In Alpine keeping, holy and cloud-hid;  
The mimic eagles dared what Nature's  
did,  
And over-rushed her mountainous re-  
pose  
In search of eyries; and the Egyptian  
river  
Mingled the same word with its grand  
'For ever.'

## V

That name was shouted near the  
pyramidal  
Nilotic tombs, whose mummied habitants,  
Packed to humanity's significance,  
Motioned it back with stillness! shouts as  
idle  
As hiring artists' work of myrrh and  
spice  
Which swathed last glories round the  
Ptolemies.

## VI

The world's face changed to hear it.  
Kingly men  
Came down in chidden babes' bewilder-  
ment  
From autocratic places, each content  
With sprinkled ashes for anointing.—  
Then  
The people laughed, or wondered for the  
nonce,  
To see one throne a composite of thrones.

## VII

Napoleon! even the torrid vastitude  
Of India felt in throbbings of the air  
That name which scattered by disastrous  
blare  
All Europe's bound-lines,—drawn afresh  
in blood.  
Napoleon—from the Russias, west to  
Spain!  
And Austria trembled—till ye heard her  
chain.

## VIII

And Germany was 'ware; and Italy  
Oblivious of old fames—her laurel-locked,  
High-ghosted Caesars passing unin-  
voked—  
Did crumble her own ruins with her knee,  
To serve a newer.—Aye! but Frenchmen  
cast  
A future from them nobler than her past.

## IX

For, verily, though France augustly rose  
With that raised NAME, and did assume by  
such  
The purple of the world, none gave so  
much  
As she, in purchase—to speak plain, in  
loss—

Whose hands, toward freedom stretched,  
dropped paralysed  
To wield a sword or fit an undersized

## x

King's crown to a great man's head. And  
though along  
Her Paris' streets, did float on frequent  
streams  
Of triumph, pictured or emmarbled  
dreams  
Dreamt right by genius in a world gone  
wrong,—  
No dream, of all so won, was fair to see  
As the lost vision of her liberty.

## xi

Napoleon! 'twas a high name lifted high!  
It met at last God's thunder sent to clear  
Our compassing and covering atmosphere  
And open a clear sight beyond the sky  
Of supreme empire; this of earth's was  
done—  
And kings crept out again to feel the sun.

## xii

The kings crept out—the peoples sate at  
home,  
And finding the long-invoked peace  
(A pall embroidered with worn images  
Of rights divine) too scant to cover doom  
Such as they suffered,—cursed the corn  
that grew  
Rankly, to bitter bread, on Waterloo.

## xiii

A deep gloom centred in the deep repose;  
The nations stood up mute to count their  
dead.  
And *he* who owned the NAME which  
vibrated  
Through silence,—trusting to his noblest  
foes  
When earth was all too grey for chivalry,  
Died of their mercies 'mid the desert sea.

## xiv

O wild St. Helen! very still she kept him,  
With a green willow for all pyramid,—  
Which stirred a little if the low wind did,  
A little more, if pilgrims overwept him,  
Disparting the little boughs to see the clay  
Which seemed to cover his for judgement-  
day.

## xv

Nay, not so long!—France kept her old  
affection  
As deeply as the sepulchre the corpse,  
Until, dilated by such love's remorse  
To a new angel of the resurrection,  
She cried, 'Behold, thou England! I  
would have  
The dead whereof thou wottest, from  
that grave.'

## xvi

And England answered in the courtesy  
Which, ancient foes turned lovers, may  
befit,—  
'Take back thy dead! and when thou  
buriest it,  
Throw in all former strifes 'twixt thee  
and me.'  
Amen, mine England! 'tis a courteous  
claim—  
But ask a little room too... for thy shame!

## xvii

Because it was not well, it was not well,  
Nor tuneful with thy lofty-chanted part  
Among the Oceanides,—that Heart  
To bind and bare and vex with vulture fell.  
I would, my noble England! men might  
seek  
All crimson stains upon thy breast—not  
cheek!

## xviii

I would that hostile fleets had scarred  
Torbay,  
Instead of the lone ship which waited  
moored  
Until thy princely purpose was assured,  
Then left a shadow, not to pass away—  
Not for to-night's moon, nor to-  
morrow's sun!  
Green watching hills, ye witnessed what  
was done<sup>1</sup>!

## xix

But since it *was* done,—in sepulchral dust  
We fain would pay back something of  
our debt  
To France, if not to honour, and forget  
How through much fear we falsified the  
trust  
Of a fallen foe and exile.—We return  
Orestes to Electra... in his urn.

<sup>1</sup> Written at Torquay.

## xx

A little urn—a little dust inside,  
Which once outbalanced the large earth,  
albeit

To-day a four-years child might carry it  
Sleek-browed and smiling, 'Let the  
burden 'bide!'

Orestes to Electra!—O fair town  
Of Paris, how the wild tears will run down

## xxi

And run back in the chariot-marks of  
time,  
When all the people shall come forth to  
meet

The passive victor, death-still in the street  
He rode through 'mid the shouting and  
bell-chime

And martial music, under eagles which  
Dyed their rapacious beaks at Austerlitz.

## xxii

Napoleon! he hath come again—borne  
home

Upon the popular ebbing heart,—a sea  
Which gathers its own wrecks perpetu-  
ally,

Majestically moaning. Give him room!—  
Room for the dead in Paris! welcome  
solemn

And grave-deep, 'neath the cannon-  
moulded column!<sup>1</sup>

## xxiii

There, weapon spent and warrior spent  
may rest

From roar of fields,—provided Jupiter  
Dare trust Saturnus to lie down so near  
His bolts!—and this he may. For, dis-  
possessed

Of any godship lies the godlike arm—  
The goat, Jove sucked, as likely to do  
harm.

## xxiv

And yet . . . Napoleon!—the recovered  
name

Shakes the old casements of the world!  
and we

Look out upon the passing pageantry,  
Attesting that the Dead makes good his  
claim

<sup>1</sup> It was the first intention to bury him under  
the column.

To a French grave,—another kingdom  
won,  
The last, of few spans—by Napoleon.

## xxv

Blood fell like dew beneath his sunrise—  
sooth;

But glittered dew-like in the covenanted  
Meridian light. He was a despot—  
granted!

But the *avros* of his autocratic mouth  
Said yea i' the people's French; he  
magnified

The image of the freedom he denied.

## xxvi

And if they asked for rights, he made reply  
'Ye have my glory!'—and so, drawing  
round them

His ample purple, glorified and bound  
them

In an embrace that seemed identity.  
He ruled them like a tyrant—true! but  
none

Were ruled like slaves: each felt Napo-  
leon.

## xxvii

I do not praise this man: the man was  
flawed

For Adam—much more, Christ!—his  
knee unbent,

His hand unclean, his aspiration pent  
Within a sword-sweep—pshaw!—but  
since he had

The genius to be loved, why, let him  
have

The justice to be honoured in his grave.

## xxviii

I think this nation's tears thus poured  
together

Better than shouts. I think this funeral  
Grandier than crownings, though a Pope  
bless all.

I think this grave stronger than thrones.  
But whether

The crowned Napoleon or the buried clay  
Be worthier, I discern not. Angels may.

## TO FLUSH, MY DOG

## I

Loving friend, the gift of one  
 Who her own true faith has run  
 Through thy lower nature<sup>1</sup>,  
 Be my benediction said  
 With my hand upon thy head,  
 Gentle fellow creature!

## II

Like a lady's ringlets brown,  
 Flow thy silken ears adown  
 Either side demurely  
 Of thy silver-suited breast,  
 Shining out from all the rest  
 Of thy body purely.

## III

Darkly brown thy body is,  
 Till the sunshine striking this  
 Alchemize its dullness,  
 When the sleek curls manifold  
 Flash all over into gold,  
 With a burnished fullness.

## IV

Underneath my stroking hand,  
 Startled eyes of hazel bland  
 Kindling, growing larger,  
 Up thou leapest with a spring,  
 Full of prank and curvetting,  
 Leaping like a charger.

## V

Leap! thy broad tail waves a light,  
 Leap! thy slender feet are bright,  
 Canopied in fringes;  
 Leap—those tasselled ears of thine  
 Flicker strangely, fair and fine,  
 Down their golden inches.

## VI

Yet, my pretty, sportive friend,  
 Little is 't to such an end  
 That I praise thy rareness!  
 Other dogs may be thy peers  
 Haply in these drooping ears,  
 And this glossy fairness.

<sup>1</sup> This dog was the gift of my dear and admired friend, Miss Mitford, and belongs to the beautiful race she has rendered celebrated among English and American readers. The Flashes have their laurels as well as the Caesars,—the chief difference (at least the very head and front of it) consisting, perhaps, in the bald head of the latter under the crown. [1844.]

## VII

But of *thee* it shall be said,  
 This dog watched beside a bed  
 Day and night unwearied,—  
 Watched within a curtained room,  
 Where no sunbeam brake the gloom  
 Round the sick and dreary.

## VIII

Roses, gathered for a vase,  
 In that chamber died apace,  
 Beam and breeze resigning;  
 This dog only, waited on,  
 Knowing that when light is gone  
 Love remains for shining.

## IX

Other dogs in thymy dew  
 Tracked the hares and followed through  
 Sunny moor or meadow;  
 This dog only, crept and crept  
 Next a languid cheek that slept,  
 Sharing in the shadow.

## X

Other dogs of loyal cheer  
 Bounded at the whistle clear,  
 Up the woodside hieing;  
 This dog only, watched in reach  
 Of a faintly uttered speech,  
 Or a louder sighing.

## XI

And if one or two quick tears  
 Dropped upon his glossy ears.  
 Or a sigh came double,—  
 Up he sprang in eager haste,  
 Fawning, fondling, breathing fast,  
 In a tender trouble.

## XII

And this dog was satisfied  
 If a pale thin hand would glide  
 Down his dewlaps sloping,—  
 Which he pushed his nose within,  
 After,—platforming his chin  
 On the palm left open.

## XIII

This dog, if a friendly voice  
 Call him now to blyther choice  
 Than such chamber-keeping,  
 'Come out!' praying from the door,—  
 Presseth backward as before,  
 Up against me leaping.

## XIV

Therefore to this dog will I,  
Tenderly not scornfully,  
Render praise and favour :  
With my hand upon his head,  
Is my benediction said  
Therefore, and for ever.

## XV

And because he loves me so,  
Better than his kind will do  
Often, man or woman,  
Give I back more love again  
Than dogs often take of men,  
Leaning from my Human.

## XVI

Blessings on thee, dog of mine,  
Pretty collars make thee fine,  
Sugared milk make fat thee !  
Pleasures wag on in thy tail,  
Hands of gentle motion fail  
Nevermore, to pat thee !

## XVII

Downy pillow take thy head,  
Silken coverlid bestead,  
Sunshine help thy sleeping !  
No fly's buzzing wake thee up,  
No man break thy purple cup,  
Set for drinking deep in.

## XVIII

Whiskered cats aointed flee,  
Sturdy stoppers keep from thee  
Cologne distillations ;  
Nuts lie in thy path for stones,  
And thy feast-day macaroons  
Turn to daily rations !

## XIX

Mock I thee, in wishing weal !—  
Tears are in my eyes to feel  
Thou art made so straitly,  
Blessing needs must straiten too,—  
Little canst thou joy or do,  
Thou who lovest *greatly*.

## XX

Yet be blessed to the height  
Of all good and all delight  
Pervious to thy nature ;  
Only *loved* beyond that line,  
With a love that answers thine,  
Loving fellow creature !

## THE DESERTED GARDEN

I MIND me in the days departed,  
How often underneath the sun  
With childish bounds I used to run  
To a garden long deserted.

The beds and walks were vanished quite;  
And wheresoe'er had struck the spade,  
The greenest grasses Nature laid,  
To sanctify her right.

I called the place my wilderness,  
For no one entered there but I ;  
The sheep looked in, the grass to espy,  
And passed it ne'ertheless.

The trees were interwoven wild,  
And spread their boughs enough about  
To keep both sheep and shepherd out,  
But not a happy child.

Adventurous joy it was for me !  
I crept beneath the boughs, and found  
A circle smooth of mossy ground  
Beneath a poplar tree.

Old garden rose-trees hedged it in,  
Bedropt with roses waxen-white  
Well satisfied with dew and light  
And careless to be seen.

Long years ago it might befall,  
When all the garden flowers were trim,  
The grave old gardener prided him  
On these the most of all.

Some lady, stately overmuch,  
Here moving with a silken noise,  
Has blushed beside them at the voice  
That likened her to such.

And these, to make a diadem,  
She often may have plucked and twined,  
Half-smiling as it came to mind  
That few would look at *them*.

Oh, little thought that lady proud,  
A child would watch her fair white rose,  
When buried lay her whiter brows,  
And silk was changed for shroud !—

Nor thought that gardener (full of scorn  
For men unlearned and simple phrase),  
A child would bring it all its praise  
By creeping through the thorns !

To me upon my low moss seat,  
Though never a dream the roses sent  
Of science or love's compliment,  
I ween they smelt as sweet.

It did not move my grief to see  
The trace of human step departed :  
Because the garden was deserted,  
The blither place for me !

Friends, blame me not ! a narrow ken  
Has childhood 'twixt the sun and sword :  
We draw the moral afterward—  
We feel the gladness then.

And gladdest hours for me did glide  
In silence at the rose-tree wall ;  
A thrush made gladness musical  
Upon the other side.

Nor he nor I did e'er incline  
To peck or pluck the blossoms white ;  
How should I know but roses might  
Lead lives as glad as mine !

To make my hermit-home complete,  
I brought clear water from the spring  
Praised in its own low murmuring,—  
And cresses glossy wet.

And so, I thought, my likeness grew  
(Without the melancholy tale)  
To 'gentle hermit of the dale,'  
And Angelina too.

For oft I read within my nook  
Such minstrel stories ; till the breeze  
Made sounds poetic in the trees,—  
And then I shut the book.

If I shut this wherein I write  
I hear no more the wind athwart  
Those trees,—nor feel that childish heart  
Delighting in delight.

My childhood from my life is parted,  
My footstep from the moss which drew  
Its fairy circle round : anew  
The garden is deserted.

Another thrush may there rehearse  
The madrigals which sweetest are ;  
No more for me !—myself afar  
Do sing a sadder verse.

Ah me, ah me ! when erst I lay  
In that child's-nest so greenly wrought.  
I laughed unto myself and thought :  
'The time will pass away.'

And still I laughed, and did not fear  
But that, whene'er was past away  
The childish time, some happier play  
My womanhood would cheer.

I knew the time would pass away,  
And yet, beside the rose-tree wall,  
Dear God, how seldom, if at all,  
Did I look up to pray !

The time is past ;—and now that grows  
The cypress high among the trees,  
And I behold white sepulchres  
As well as the white rose,—

When graver, meeker thoughts are given,  
And I have learnt to lift my face,  
Reminded how earth's greenest place  
The colour draws from heaven,—

It something saith for earthly pain,  
But more for Heavenly promise free,  
That I who was, would shrink to be  
That happy child again.

### MY DOVES

O Weisheit ! Du red'st wie eine Taube !  
GOETHE.

My little doves have left a nest  
Upon an Indian tree,  
Whose leaves fantastic take their rest  
Or motion from the sea ;  
For, ever there, the sea-winds go  
With sunlit paces to and fro.

The tropic flowers looked up to it,  
The tropic stars looked down,  
And there my little doves did sit,  
With feathers softly brown,  
And glittering eyes that showed their  
right  
To general Nature's deep delight.

And God them taught, at every close  
Of murmuring waves beyond,  
And green leaves round, to interpose  
Their choral voices fond,  
Interpreting that love must be  
The meaning of the earth and sea.

Fit ministers! Of living loves,  
Theirs hath the calmest fashion,  
Their living voice the likeliest moves  
To lifeless intonation,  
The lovely monotone of springs  
And winds, and such insensate things.

My little doves were ta'en away  
From that glad nest of theirs,  
Across an ocean rolling grey,  
And tempest-clouded airs:  
My little doves,—who lately knew  
The sky and wave by warmth and blue!

And now, within the city prison,  
In mist and chillness pent,  
With sudden upward look they listen  
For sounds of past content—  
For lapse of water, swell of breeze,  
Or nut-fruit falling from the trees.

The stir without the glow of passion,  
The triumph of the mart,  
The gold and silver as they clash on  
Man's cold metallic heart—  
The roar of wheels, the cry for bread,—  
These only sounds are heard instead.

Yet still, as on my human hand  
Their fearless heads they lean,  
And almost seem to understand  
What human musings mean,  
(Their eyes, with such a plaintive shine,  
Are fastened upwardly to mine!)

Soft falls their chant as on the nest  
Beneath the sunny zone;  
For love that stirred it in their breast  
Has not aweary grown,  
And 'neath the city's shade can keep  
The well of music clear and deep.

And love that keeps the music, fills  
With pastoral memories:  
All echoings from out the hills,  
All droppings from the skies,  
All flowings from the wave and wind,  
Remembered in their chant, I find.

So teach ye me the wisest part,  
My little doves! to move  
Along the city-ways with heart  
Assured by holy love,  
And vocal with such songs as own  
A fountain to the world unknown.

'Twas hard to sing by Babel's stream—  
More hard, in Babel's street!  
But if the soulless creatures deem  
Their music not unmeet  
For sunless walls—let us begin,  
Who wear immortal wings within!

To me, fair memories belong  
Of scenes that used to bless,  
For no regret, but present song,  
And lasting thankfulness,  
And very soon to break away,  
Like types, in purer things than they.

I will have hopes that cannot fade,  
For flowers the valley yields!  
I will have humble thoughts instead  
Of silent, dewy fields!  
My spirit and my God shall be  
My seaward hill, my boundless sea.

## HECTOR IN THE GARDEN

### I

NINE years old! The first of any  
Seem the happiest years that come:  
Yet when I was nine, I said  
No such word!—I thought instead  
That the Greeks had used as many  
In besieging Ilium.

### II

Nine green years had scarcely brought me  
To my childhood's haunted spring:  
I had life, like flowers and bees,  
In betwixt the country trees,  
And the sun the pleasure taught me  
Which he teacheth every thing.

### III

If the rain fell, there was sorrow,  
Little head leant on the pane,  
Little finger drawing down it  
The long trailing drops upon it,  
And the 'Rain, rain, come to-morrow,'  
Said for charm against the rain.

## IV

Such a charm was right Canidian,  
 Though you meet it with a jeer!  
 If I said it long enough,  
 Then the rain hummed dimly off,  
 And the thrush with his pure Lydian  
 Was left only to the ear;

## V

And the sun and I together  
 Went a-rushing out of doors!  
 We, our tender spirits, drew  
 Over hill and dale in view,  
 Glimmering hither, glimmering thither,  
 In the footsteps of the showers.

## VI

Underneath the chestnuts dripping,  
 Through the grasses wet and fair,  
 Straight I sought my garden-ground  
 With the laurel on the mound,  
 And the pear-tree oversweeping  
 A side-shadow of green air.

## VII

In the garden lay supinely  
 A huge giant wrought of spade!  
 Arms and legs were stretched at length  
 In a passive giant strength,—  
 The fine meadow turf, cut finely,  
 Round them laid and interlaid.

## VIII

Call him Hector, son of Priam!  
 Such his title and degree:  
 With my rake I smoothed his brow,  
 Both his cheeks I weeded through,  
 But a rimer such as I am  
 Scarce can sing his dignity.

## IX

Eyes of gentianellas azure,  
 Staring, winking at the skies;  
 Nose of gillyflowers and box;  
 Scented grasses put for locks,  
 Which a little breeze, at pleasure,  
 Set a-waving round his eyes.

## X

Brazen helm of daffodillies,  
 With a glitter toward the light;  
 Purple violets for the mouth,  
 Breathing perfumes west and south;  
 And a sword of flashing lilies,  
 Holden ready for the fight.

## XI

And a breastplate made of daisies,  
 Closely fitting, leaf on leaf;  
 Periwinkles interlaced  
 Drawn for belt about the waist;  
 While the brown bees, humming praises,  
 Shot their arrows round the chief.

## XII

And who knows (I sometimes wondered)  
 If the disembodied soul  
 Of old Hector, once of Troy,  
 Might not take a dreary joy  
 Here to enter—if it thundered,  
 Rolling up the thunder-roll!

## XIII

Rolling this way from Troy-ruin,  
 In this body rude and rife  
 Just to enter, and take rest  
 'Neath the daisies of the breast—  
 They, with tender roots, renewing  
 His heroic heart to life!

## XIV

Who could know! I sometimes started  
 At a motion or a sound!  
 Did his mouth speak—naming Troy,  
 With an *ororororoi*!  
 Did the pulse of the Strong-hearted  
 Make the daisies tremble round!

## XV

It was hard to answer, often:  
 But the birds sang in the tree—  
 But the little birds sang bold  
 In the pear-tree green and old,  
 And my terror seemed to soften  
 Through the courage of their glees.

## XVI

Oh, the birds, the tree, the ruddy  
 And white blossoms, sleek with rain!  
 Oh, my garden, rich with pansies!  
 Oh, my childhood's bright romances!  
 All revive, like Hector's body,  
 And I see them stir again!

## XVII

And despite life's changes—chances,  
 And despite the deathbell's toll,  
 They press on me in full seeming!  
 Help, some angel! stay this dreaming!  
 As the birds sang in the branches,  
 Sing God's patience through my soul!

## XVIII

That no dreamer, no neglecter  
Of the present's work unsped,  
I may wake up and be doing,  
Life's heroic ends pursuing,  
Though my past is dead as Hector,  
And though Hector is twice dead.

## SLEEPING AND WATCHING

## I

SLEEP on, baby, on the floor,  
Tired of all the playing!  
Sleep with smile the sweeter for  
That, you dropped away in!  
On your curls' full roundness, stand  
Golden lights serenely;  
One cheek, pushed out by the hand,  
Folds the dimple inly.  
Little head and little foot  
Heavy laid for pleasure,  
Underneath the lids half shut,  
Slants the shining azure.—  
Open-soul in noonday sun,  
So, you lie and slumber!  
Nothing evil having done,  
Nothing can encumber.

## II

I, who cannot sleep as well,  
Shall I sigh to view you?  
Or sigh further to foretell  
All that may undo you?  
Nay, keep smiling, little child,  
Ere the sorrow neareth:  
I will smile too! patience mild  
Pleasure's token weareth.  
Nay, keep sleeping before loss:  
I shall sleep though losing!  
As by cradle, so by cross,  
Sure is the reposing.

## III

And God knows who sees us twain,  
Child at childish leisure,  
I am near as tired of pain  
As you seem of pleasure.  
Very soon too, by His grace  
Gently wrapt around me,  
Shall I show as calm a face,  
Shall I sleep as soundly.

Differing in this, that you  
Clasp your playthings, sleeping,  
While my hand shall drop the few  
Given to my keeping:  
Differing in this, that I  
Sleeping shall be colder,  
And in waking presently,  
Brighter to beholder:  
Differing in this beside  
(Sleeper, have you heard me?  
Do you move, and open wide  
Eyes of wonder toward me?)—  
That while you, I thus recall  
From your sleep, I solely,  
Me from mine an angel shall,  
With reveillie holy.

## SOUNDS

ἤκουσας ἢ οὐκ ἤκουσας;  
AESCHYLUS.

## I

HEARKEN, hearken!  
The rapid river carrieth  
Many noises underneath  
The hoary ocean:  
Teaching his solemnity  
Sounds of inland life and glee,  
Learnt beside the waving tree,  
When the winds in summer prank  
Toss the shades from bank to bank,  
And the quick rains, in emotion  
Which rather gladdens earth than grieves,  
Count and visibly rehearse  
The pulses of the universe  
Upon the summer leaves—  
Learnt among the lilies straight,  
When they bow them to the weight  
Of many bees whose hidden hum  
Seemeth from themselves to come—  
Learnt among the grasses green,  
Where the rustling mice are seen  
By the gleaming, as they run,  
Of their quick eyes in the sun;  
And lazy sheep are browsing through,  
With their noses trailed in dew;  
And the squirrel leaps adown,  
Holding fast the filbert brown;  
And the lark, with more of mirth  
In his song than suits the earth.

Droppeth some in soaring high,  
 To pour the rest out in the sky ;  
 While the woodland doves, apart  
 In the copse's leafy heart,  
 Solitary, not ascetic,  
 Hidden and yet vocal, seem  
 Joining, in a lovely psalm,  
 Man's despondence, nature's calm,  
 Half mystical and half pathetic,  
 Like a sighing in a dream<sup>1</sup>.  
 All these sounds the river telleth,  
 Softened to an undertone  
 Which ever and anon he swelleth  
 By a burden of his own,  
 In the ocean's ear.  
 Aye! and Ocean seems to hear  
 With an inward gentle scorn,  
 Smiling to his caverns worn.

## II

Hearken, hearken !  
 The child is shouting at his play  
 Just in the tramping funeral's way ;  
 The widow moans as she turns aside  
 To shun the face of the blushing bride,  
 While, shaking the tower of the ancient  
 church,  
 The marriage bells do swing ;  
 And in the shadow of the porch  
 An idiot sits, with his lean hands full  
 Of hedgerow flowers and a poet's skull,  
 Laughing loud and gibbering,  
 Because it is so brown a thing,  
 While he sticketh the gaudy poppies red  
 In and out the senseless head  
 Where all sweet fancies grew instead.  
 And you may hear, at the self-same time,  
 Another poet who reads his rime,  
 Low as a brook in the summer air,—

<sup>1</sup> While floating up bright forms ideal,  
 Mistress, or friend, around me stream ;  
 Half sense-supplied, and half unreal,  
 Like music mingling with a dream.

JOHN KENTON.

I do not doubt that the 'music' of the two concluding lines mingled, though very unconsciously, with my own 'dream,' and gave their form and pressure to the above distich. The ideas however being sufficiently distinct, I am satisfied with sending this note to the press after my verses, and with acknowledging another obligation to the valued friend to whom I already owe so many. [1844.]

Save when he droppeth his voice adown,  
 To dream of the amaranthine crown  
 His mortal brows shall wear ;  
 And a baby cries with a feeble sound  
 'Neath the weary weight of the life  
 new-found ;  
 And an old man groans,—with his  
 testament  
 Only half-signed,—for the life that's  
 spent ;  
 And lovers twain do softly say,  
 As they sit on a grave, 'For ay, for ay' ;  
 And foemen twain, while Earth their  
 mother  
 Looks greenly upward, curse each other.  
 A schoolboy drones his task, with looks  
 Cast over the page to the elm-tree rooks ,  
 A lonely student cries aloud  
*Eureka!* claspings at his shroud ;  
 A beldame's age-cracked voice doth sing  
 To a little infant slumbering ;  
 A maid forgotten weeps alone,  
 Muffling her sobs on the trysting stone ;  
 A sick man wakes at his own mouth's wail,  
 A gossip coughs in her thrice-told tale,  
 A muttering gamester shakes the dice,  
 A reaper foretells good luck from the skies,  
 A monarch vows as he lifts his hand to  
 them ;  
 A patriot leaving his native land to them,  
 Cries to the world against perjured state,  
 A priest disserts upon linen skirts,  
 A sinner screams for one hope more,  
 A dancer's feet do palpitate  
 A piper's music out on the floor.  
 And nigh to the awful Dead, the living  
 Low speech and stealthy steps are giving,  
 Because he cannot hear!  
 And *he* who on that narrow bier  
 Has room enough, is closely wound  
 In a silence piercing more than sound.

## III

Hearken, hearken !  
 God speaketh to thy soul,  
 Using the supreme voice which doth  
 confound  
 All life with consciousness of Deity,  
 All senses into one,—  
 As the seer-saint of Patmos, loving John  
 (For whom did backward roll  
 The cloud-gate of the future) turned to see  
 The Voice which spake. It speaketh now,

Through the regular breath of the calm  
creation,  
Through the moan of the creature's  
desolation  
Striking, and in its stroke, resembling  
The memory of a solemn vow,  
Which pierceth the din of a festival  
To one in the midst,—and he letteth fall  
The cup, with a sudden trembling.

## IV

Hearken, hearken!  
God speaketh in thy soul,  
Saying, 'O thou that movest  
With feeble steps across this earth of  
Mine,  
To break beside the fount thy golden bowl  
And spill its purple wine,—  
Look up to heaven and see how, like  
a scroll,  
My right hand hath thine immortality  
In an eternal grasping! thou, that lovest  
The songful birds and grasses underfoot,  
And also what change mars and tombs  
pollute—  
*I am the end of love!—give love to Me!*  
O thou that sinnest, grace doth more  
abound  
Than all thy sin! sit still beneath My  
rod,  
And count the droppings of My victim-  
blood,  
And seek none other sound!'

## V

Hearken, hearken!  
Shall we hear the lapsing river  
And our brother's sighing ever,  
And not the voice of God?

## THE LOST BOWER

## I

In the pleasant orchard closes,  
'God bless all our gains,' say we;  
But 'May God bless all our losses,'  
Better suits with our degree.  
Listen, gentle—aye, and simple! listen,  
children on the knee!

## II

Green the land is where my daily  
Steps in jocund childhood played,  
Dimpled close with hill and valley,  
Dappled very close with shade;  
Summer-snow of apple blossoms running  
up from glade to glade.

## III

There is one hill I see nearer  
In my vision of the rest;  
And a little wood seems clearer  
As it climbeth from the west,  
Sideway from the tree-locked valley, to  
the airy upland crest.

## IV

Small the wood is, green with hazels,  
And, completing the ascent,  
Where the wind blows and sun dazzles  
Thrills in leafy tremblement,  
Like a heart that, after climbing, beateth  
quickly through content.

## V

Not a step the wood advances  
O'er the open hill-top's bound;  
There, in green arrest, the branches  
See their image on the ground:  
You may walk beneath them smiling,  
glad with sight and glad with  
sound.

## VI

For you hearken on your right hand,  
How the birds do leap and call  
In the greenwood, out of sight and  
Out of reach and fear of all;  
And the squirrels crack the filberts  
through their cheerful madrigal.

## VII

On your left, the sheep are cropping  
The slant grass and daisies pale,  
And five apple-trees stand dropping  
Separate shadows toward the vale,  
Over which, in choral silence, the hills  
look you their 'All hail!'

## VIII

Far out, kindled by each other,  
Shining hills on hills arise,  
Close as brother leans to brother  
When they press beneath the eyes  
Of some father praying blessings from  
the gifts of paradise.

## IX

While beyond, above them mounted,  
And above their woods also,  
Malvern hills, for mountains counted  
Not unduly, loom a-row—  
Keepers of Piers Plowman's visions  
through the sunshine and the  
snow<sup>1</sup>.

## X

Yet, in childhood, little prized I  
That fair walk and far survey :  
'Twas a straight walk unadvised by  
The least mischief worth a nay ;  
Up and down—as dull as grammar on  
the eve of holiday.

## XI

But the wood, all close and clenching  
Bough in bough and root in root,—  
No more sky (for over-branching)  
At your head than at your foot,—  
Oh, the wood drew me within it, by a  
glamour past dispute.

## XII

Few and broken paths showed through  
it,  
Where the sheep had tried to run,—  
Forced with snowy wool to strew it  
Round the thickets, when anon  
They, with silly thorn-pricked noses,  
bleated back into the sun.

## XIII

But my childish heart beat stronger  
Than those thickets dared to grow :  
I could pierce them ! I could longer  
Travel on, methought, than so.  
Sheep for sheep-paths ! braver children  
climb and creep where they would  
go.

## XIV

And the poets wander, said I,  
Over places all as rude :  
Bold Rinaldo's lovely lady  
Sate to meet him in a wood :  
Rosalinda, like a fountain, laughed out  
pure with solitude.

<sup>1</sup> The Malvern Hills of Worcestershire are the scene of Langland's Visions, and thus present the earliest classic ground of English poetry.

## XV

And if Chaucer had not travelled  
Through a forest by a well,  
He had never dreamt nor marvelled  
At those ladies fair and fell  
Who lived smiling without loving in their  
island-citadel.

## XVI

Thus I thought of the old singers,  
And took courage from their song,  
Till my little struggling fingers  
Tore asunder gyve and thong  
Of the brambles which entrapped me, and  
the barrier branches strong.

## XVII

On a day, such pastime keeping,  
With a fawn's heart debonair,  
Under-crawling, overleaping  
Thorns that prick and boughs that bear,  
I stood suddenly astonished—I was glad-  
dened unaware.

## XVIII

From the place I stood in, floated  
Back the covert dim and close,  
And the open ground was coated  
Carpet-smooth with grass and moss,  
And the blue-bell's purple presencesigned  
it worthily across.

## XIX

Here a linden-tree stood, bright'ning  
All adown its silver rind ;  
For as some trees draw the lightning,  
So this tree, unto my mind,  
Drew to earth the blessed sunshine from  
the sky where it was shrined.

## XX

Tall the linden-tree, and near it  
An old hawthorn also grew ;  
And wood-ivy like a spirit  
Hovered dimly round the two,  
Shaping thence that bower of beauty  
which I sing of thus to you.

## XXI

'Twas a bower for garden fitter  
Than for any woodland wide ;  
Though a fresh and dewy glitter  
Struck it through from side to side,  
Shaped and shaven was the freshness,  
as by garden-cunning plied.

## XXII

Oh, a lady might have come there,  
 Hooded fairly like her hawk,  
 With a book or lute in summer,  
 And a hope of sweeter talk,—  
 Listening close to her own music than for  
 footsteps on the walk.

## XXIII

But that bower appeared a marvel  
 In the wildness of the place;  
 With such seeming art and travail,  
 Finely fixed and fitted was  
 Leaf to leaf, the dark-green ivy, to the  
 summit from the base.

## XXIV

And the ivy veined and glossy  
 Was enwrought with eglantine;  
 And the wild hop fibred closely,  
 And the large-leaved columbine,  
 Arch of door and window mullion, did  
 right sylvanly entwine.

## XXV

Rose-trees either side the door were  
 Growing lithe and growing tall,  
 Each one set a summer warder  
 For the keeping of the hall,—  
 With a red rose and a white rose, lean-  
 ing, nodding at the wall.

## XXVI

As I entered—mosses hushing  
 Stole all noises from my foot;  
 And a green elastic cushion,  
 Clapsed within the linden's root,  
 Took me in a chair of silence very rare  
 and absolute.

## XXVII

All the floor was paved with glory,  
 Greenly, silently inlaid  
 (Through quick motions made before  
 me),  
 With fair counterparts in shade  
 Of the fair serrated ivy-leaves which  
 slanted overhead.

## XXVIII

'Is such pavement in a palace?'  
 So I questioned in my thought.  
 The sun, shining through the chalice  
 Of the red rose hung without,  
 Threw within a red libation, like an  
 answer to my doubt.

## XXIX

At the same time, on the linen  
 Of my childish lap there fell  
 Two white may-leaves, downward  
 winning  
 Through the ceiling's miracle,  
 From a blossom, like an angel, out of  
 sight yet blessing well.

## XXX

Down to floor and up to ceiling  
 Quick I turned my childish face,  
 With an innocent appealing  
 For the secret of the place  
 To the trees, which surely knew it, in  
 partaking of the grace.

## XXXI

Where's no foot of human creature,  
 How could reach a human hand?  
 And if this be work of nature,  
 Why has nature turned so bland,  
 Breaking off from other wild work? It  
 was hard to understand.

## XXXII

Was she weary of rough-doing,—  
 Of the bramble and the thorn?  
 Did she pause in tender rueing  
 Here of all her sylvan scorn?  
 Or, in mock of art's deceiving, was the  
 sudden mildness worn?

## XXXIII

Or could this same bower (I fancied)  
 Be the work of Dryad strong,  
 Who, surviving all that chanced  
 In the world's old pagan wrong,  
 Lay hid, feeding in the woodland on the  
 last true poet's song?

## XXXIV

Or was this the house of fairies,  
 Left, because of the rough ways,  
 Unsoiled by Ave Marys  
 Which the passing pilgrim prays,  
 And beyond Saint Catherine's chiming  
 on the blessed Sabbath days?

## XXXV

So, young muser, I sate listening  
 To my fancy's wildest word.  
 On a sudden, through the glistening  
 Leaves around, a little stirred,  
 Came a sound, a sense of music, which  
 was rather felt than heard.

## XXXVI

Softly, finely, it enwound me;  
 From the world it shut me in,—  
 Like a fountain, falling round me,  
 Which with silver waters thin  
 Clips a little water Naiad sitting smilingly  
 within.

## XXXVII

Whence the music came, who know-  
 eth?  
*I* know nothing. But indeed  
 Pan or Faunus never bloweth  
 So much sweetness from a reed  
 Which has sucked the milk of waters  
 at the oldest river-head.

## XXXVIII

Never lark the sun can waken  
 With such sweetness! when the lark,  
 The high planets overtaking  
 In the half-*evanished* Dark,  
 Casts his singing to their singing, like  
 an arrow to the mark.

## XXXIX

Never nightingale so singeth:  
 Oh, she leans on thorny tree,  
 And her poet-song she flingeth  
 Over pain to victory!  
 Yet she never sings such music,—or  
 she sings it not to me.

## XL

Never blackbirds, never thrushes,  
 Nor small finches sing as sweet,  
 When the sun strikes through the  
 bushes  
 To their crimson clinging feet,  
 And their pretty eyes look sideways to  
 the summer heavens complete.

## XLI

If it *were* a bird, it seemèd,  
 Most like Chaucer's, which, in sooth,  
 He of green and azure dreamèd,  
 While it sate in spirit-ruth  
 On that bier of a crowned lady, singing  
 nigh her silent mouth.

## XLII

If it *were* a bird!—ah, sceptic,  
 Give me 'yea' or give me 'nay'—

Though my soul were nympholeptic,  
 As I heard that virèlay,  
 You may stoop your pride to pardon,  
 for my sin is far away.

## XLIII

I rose up in exaltation  
 And an inward trembling heat,  
 And (it seemèd) in geste of passion  
 Dropped the music to my feet  
 Like a garment rustling downwards!—  
 such a silence followed it.

## XLIV

Heart and head beat through the quiet  
 Full and heavily, though slower.  
 In the song, I think, and by it,  
 Mystic Presences of power  
 Had up-snatched me to the Timeless,  
 then returned me to the Hour.

## XLV

In a child-*abstraction* lifted,  
 Straightway from the bower I past,  
 Foot and soul being dimly drifted  
 Through the greenwood, till, at last,  
 In the hill-top's open sunshine I all  
 consciously was cast.

## XLVI

Face to face with the true mountains  
 I stood silently and still,  
 Drawing strength from fancy's daunt-  
 ings,  
 From the air about the hill,  
 And from Nature's open mercies, and  
 most debonair goodwill.

## XLVII

Oh, the golden-hearted daisies  
 Witnessed there, before my youth,  
 To the truth of things, with praises  
 Of the beauty of the truth,  
 And I woke to Nature's real, laughing  
 joyfully for both.

## XLVIII

And I said within me, laughing,  
 I have found a bower to-day,  
 A green *lusus*—fashioned half in  
 Chance, and half in Nature's play—  
 And a little bird sings nigh it, I will  
 nevermore missay.

## XLIX

Henceforth, *I* will be the fairy  
Of this bower not built by one;  
I will go there, sad or merry,  
With each morning's benison,  
And the bird shall be my harper in the  
dream-hall I have won.

## L

So I said. But the next morning,  
(—Child, look up into my face—  
'Ware, O sceptic, of your scorning!  
This is truth in its pure grace!)  
The next morning, all had vanished, or  
my wandering missed the place.

## LI

Bring an oath most sylvan holy,  
And upon it swear me true—  
By the wind-bells swinging slowly  
Their mute curfews in the dew,  
By the advent of the snowdrop, by the  
rosemary and rue,—

## LII

I affirm by all or any,  
Let the cause be charm or chance,  
That my wandering searches many  
Missed the bower of my romance—  
That I nevermore, upon it, turned my  
mortal countenance.

## LIII

I affirm that, since I lost it,  
Never bower has seemed so fair;  
Never garden-creeper crossed it  
With so deft and brave an air—  
Never bird sung in the summer, as I  
saw and heard them there.

## LIV

Day by day, with new desire,  
Toward my wood I ran in faith,  
Under leaf and over brier,  
Through the thickets, out of breath—  
Like the prince who rescued Beauty  
from the sleep as long as death.

## LV

But his sword of mettle clashèd,  
And his arm smote strong, I ween,

And her dreaming spirit flashèd  
Through her body's fair white screen,  
And the light thereof might guide him  
up the cedar alleys green.

## LVI

But for me, I saw no splendour—  
All my sword was my child-heart;  
And the wood refused surrender  
Of that bower it held apart,  
Safe as Oedipus's grave-place, 'mid  
Colonos' olives swart.

## LVII

As Aladdin sought the basements  
His fair palace rose upon,  
And the four-and-twenty casements  
Which gave answers to the sun;  
So, in wilderment of gazing I looked up,  
and I looked down.

## LVIII

Years have vanished since as wholly  
As the little bower did then;  
And you call it tender folly  
That such thoughts should come again?  
Ah, I cannot change this sighing for  
your smiling, brother men!

## LIX

For this loss it did prefigure  
Other loss of better good,  
When my soul, in spirit-vigour,  
And in ripened womanhood,  
Fell from visions of more beauty than  
an arbour in a wood.

## LX

I have lost—oh, many a pleasure,  
Many a hope, and many a power—  
Studious health, and merry leisure,  
The first dew on the first flower!  
But the first of all my losses was the  
losing of the bower.

## LXI

I have lost the dream of Doing,  
And the other dream of Done,  
The first spring in the pursuing,  
The first pride in the Begun,—  
First recoil from incompleteness, in the  
face of what is won—

## LXII

Exaltations in the far light  
Where some cottage only is ;  
Mild dejections in the starlight,  
Which the sadder-hearted miss ;  
And the child-cheek blushing scarlet for  
the very shame of bliss.

## LXIII

I have lost the sound child-sleeping  
Which the thunder could not break ;  
Something too of the strong leaping  
Of the staglike heart awake,  
Which the pale is low for keeping in  
the road it ought to take.

## LXIV

Some respect to social fictions  
Has been also lost by me ;  
And some generous genuflexions,  
Which my spirit offered free  
To the pleasant old conventions of our  
false humanity.

## LXV

All my losses did I tell you,  
Ye, perchance, would look away ;—  
Ye would answer me, ' Farewell ! you  
Make sad company to-day,  
And your tears are falling faster than  
the bitter words you say.'

## LXVI

For God placed me like a dial  
In the open ground with power,  
And my heart had for its trial  
All the sun and all the shower !  
And I suffered many losses,—and my  
first was of the bower.

## LXVII

Laugh you ? If that loss of mine be  
Of no heavy-seeming weight—  
When the cone falls from the pine-tree  
The young children laugh thereat ;  
Yet the wind that struck it, riseth, and  
the tempest shall be great.

## LXVIII

One who knew me in my childhood  
In the glamour and the game,

Looking on me long and mild, would  
Never know me for the same.  
Come, unchanging recollections, where  
those changes overcame.

## LXIX

By this couch I weakly lie on,  
While I count my memories,—  
Through the fingers which, still sigh-  
ing,  
I press closely on mine eyes,—  
Clear as once beneath the sunshine,  
I behold the bower arise.

## LXX

Springs the linden-tree as greenly,  
Stroked with light adown its rind ;  
And the ivy-leaves serenely  
Each in either intertwined ;  
And the rose-trees at the doorway, they  
have neither grown nor pined.

## LXXI

From those overblown faint roses  
Not a leaf appeareth shed,  
And that little bud discloses  
Not a thorn's-breadth more of red  
For the winters and the summers which  
" have passed me overhead.

## LXXII

And that music overfloweth,  
Sudden sweet, the sylvan eaves :  
Thrush or nightingale—who knoweth ?  
Fay or Faunus—who believes !  
But my heart still trembles in me to the  
trembling of the leaves.

## LXXIII

Is the bower lost, then ? who sayeth  
That the bower indeed is lost !  
Hark ! my spirit in it prayeth  
Through the sunshine and the frost,—  
And the prayer preserves it greenly, to  
the last and uttermost.

## LXXIV

Till another open for me  
In God's Eden-land unknown,  
With an angel at the doorway,  
White with gazing at His Throne,  
And a saint's voice in the palm-trees,  
singing—'All is lost . . . and won !'

## A SONG AGAINST SINGING

TO E. J. H.

## I

THEY bid me sing to thee,  
 Thou golden-haired and silver-voic'd  
 child,—  
 With lips by no worse sigh than sleep's  
 defiled,  
 With eyes unknowing how tears dim  
 the sight,  
 And feet all trembling at the new delight,  
 Treaders of earth to be!

## II

Ah no! the lark may bring  
 A song to thee from out the morning cloud,  
 The merry river from its lilies bowed,  
 The brisk rain from the trees, the lucky  
 wind,  
 That half doth make its music, half doth  
 find,—  
 But I—I may not sing.

## III

How could I think it right,  
 New-comer on our earth as, Sweet,  
 thou art,  
 To bring a verse from out a human heart  
 Made heavy with accumulated tears,  
 And cross with such amount of weary  
 years  
 Thy day-sum of delight?

## IV

Even if the verse were said,  
 Thou, who wouldst clap thy tiny hands  
 to hear  
 The wind or rain, gay bird or river clear,  
 Wouldst, at that sound of sad humanities,  
 Upturn thy bright uncomprehending  
 eyes  
 And bid me play instead.

## V

Therefore no song of mine,—  
 But prayer in place of singing; prayer  
 that would  
 Commend thee to the new-creating God,  
 Whose gift is childhood's heart without  
 its stain  
 Of weakness, ignorance, and changing  
 vain—  
 That gift of God be thine!

## VI

So wilt thou ay be young,  
 In lovelier childhood than thy shining  
 brow  
 And pretty winning accents make thee  
 now:  
 Yea, sweeter than this scarce articulate  
 sound  
 (How sweet!) of 'father,' 'mother,'  
 shall be found  
 The ABBA on thy tongue.

## VII

And so, as years shall chase  
 Each other's shadows, thou wilt less  
 resemble  
 Thy fellows of the earth who toil and  
 tremble,  
 Than him thou seest not, thine angel bold  
 Yet meek, whose ever-lifted eyes behold  
 The Ever-loving's face.

## WINE OF CYPRUS

GIVEN TO ME BY H. S. BOYD, AUTHOR  
 OF 'SELECT PASSAGES FROM THE  
 GREEK FATHERS,' ETC., TO WHOM  
 THESE STANZAS ARE ADDRESSED

## I

If old Bacchus were the speaker  
 He would tell you with a sigh,  
 Of the Cyprus in this beaker  
 I am sipping like a fly,—  
 Like a fly or gnat on Ida  
 At the hour of goblet-pledge,  
 By queen Juno brushed aside, a  
 Full white arm-sweep, from the edge.

## II

Sooth, the drinking should be ampler  
 When the drink is so divine,  
 And some deep-mouthed Greek exampler  
 Would become your Cyprus wine:  
 Cyclops' mouth might plunge aright in,  
 While his one eye over-leered—  
 Nor too large were mouth of Titan,  
 Drinking rivers down his beard.

## III

Pan might dip his head so deep in  
 That his ears alone pricked out,  
 Fauns around him, pressing, leaping,  
 Each one pointing to his throat :  
 While the Naiads, like Bacchantes,  
 Wild, with urns thrown out to waste,  
 Cry,—‘O earth, that thou wouldst grant  
 us  
 Springs to keep, of such a taste!’

## IV

But for me, I am not worthy  
 After gods and Greeks to drink,  
 And my lips are pale and earthy  
 To go bathing from this brink :  
 Since you heard them speak the last time  
 They have faded from their blooms,  
 And the laughter of my pastime  
 Has learnt silence at the tombs.

## V

Ah, my friend! the antique drinkers  
 Crowned the cup and crowned the  
 brow.  
 Can I answer the old thinkers  
 In the forms they thought of, now?  
 Who will fetch from garden-closes  
 Some new garlands while I speak,  
 That the forehead, crowned with roses,  
 May strike scarlet down the cheek?

## VI

Do not mock me! with my mortal  
 Suits no wreath again, indeed;  
 I am sad-voiced as the turtle  
 Which Anacreon used to feed:  
 Yet as that same bird demurely  
 Wet her beak in cup of his,  
 So, without a garland, surely  
 I may touch the brim of this.

## VII

Go,—let others praise the Chian!—  
 This is soft as Muses’ string,  
 This is tawny as Rhea’s lion,  
 This is rapid as his spring,  
 Bright as Paphia’s eyes e’er met us,  
 Light as ev’er trod her feet!  
 And the brown bees of Hyettus  
 Make their honey not so sweet.

## VIII

Very copious are my praises,  
 Though I sip it like a fly!—  
 Ah—but, sipping,—times and places  
 Change before me suddenly :  
 As Ulysses’ old libation  
 Drew the ghosts from every part,  
 So your Cyprus wine, dear Grecian,  
 Stirs the Hades of my heart.

## IX

And I think of those long mornings  
 Which my thought goes far to seek,  
 When, betwixt the folio’s turnings,  
 Solemn flowed the rhythmic Greek :  
 Past the pane the mountain spreading,  
 Swept the sheep-bell’s tinkling noise,  
 While a girlish voice was reading,  
 Somewhat low for *ai*’s and *oi*’s.

## X

Then, what golden hours were for us!—  
 While we sate together there,  
 How the white vests of the chorus  
 Seemed to wave up a live air!  
 How the cothurns trod majestic  
 Down the deep iambic lines,  
 And the rolling anapaestic  
 Curled like vapour over shrines!

## XI

Oh, our Aeschylus, the thunderous!  
 How he drove the bolted breath  
 Through the cloud, to wedge it ponderous  
 In the gnarled oak beneath.  
 Oh, our Sophocles, the royal,  
 Who was born to monarch’s place,  
 And who made the whole world loyal,  
 Less by kingly power than grace.

## XII

Our Euripides, the human,  
 With his droppings of warm tears,  
 And his touches of things common  
 Till they rose to touch the spheres!  
 Our Theocritus, our Bion,  
 And our Pindar’s shining goals!—  
 These were cup-bearers undying,  
 Of the wine that’s meant for souls

## XIII

And my Plato, the divine one,  
 If men know the gods aright  
 By their motions as they shine on  
 With a glorious trail of light !—  
 And your noble Christian bishops,  
 Who mouthed grandly the last Greek !  
 Though the sponges on their hyssops  
 Were distent with wine—too weak.

## XIV

Yet, your Chrysostom, you praised him  
 As a liberal mouth of gold ;  
 And your Basil, you upraised him  
 To the height of speakers old.  
 And we both praised Heliodorus  
 For his secret of pure lies,—  
 Who forged first his linked stories  
 In the heat of lady's eyes.

## XV

And we both praised your Synesius  
 For the fire shot up his odes,  
 Though the Church wasscarce propitious  
 As he whistled dogs and gods.  
 And we both praised Nazianzen  
 For the fervid heart and speech :  
 Only I eschewed his glancing  
 At the lyre hung out of reach.

## XVI

Do you mind that deed of Atè  
 Which you bound me to so fast,—  
 Reading 'De Virginitate,'  
 From the first line to the last ?  
 How I said at ending, solemn,  
 As I turned and looked at you,  
 That Saint Simeon on the column  
 Had had somewhat less to do ?

## XVII

For we sometimes gently wrangled,  
 Very gently, be it said,  
 Since our thoughts were disentangled  
 By no breaking of the thread !  
 And I charged you with extortions  
 On the nobler fames of old—  
 Aye, and sometimes thought your Porsons  
 Stained the purple they would fold.

## XVIII

For the rest—a mystic moaning  
 Kept Cassandra at the gate,  
 With wild eyes the vision shone in,  
 And wide nostrils scenting fate.  
 And Prometheus, bound in passion  
 By brute Force to the blind stone,  
 Showed us looks of invocation  
 Turned to ocean and the sun.

## XIX

And Medea we saw burning  
 At her nature's planted stake :  
 And proud Oedipus fate-scorning  
 While the cloud came on to break—  
 While the cloud came on slow—slower,  
 Till he stood discrowned, resigned !—  
 But the reader's voice dropped lower  
 When the poet called him BLIND.

## XX

Ah, my gossip ! you were older,  
 And more learned, and a man !—  
 Yet that shadow, the enfolder  
 Of your quiet eyelids, ran  
 Both our spirits to one level,  
 And I turned from hill and lea  
 And the summer-sun's green revel,  
 To your eyes that could not see.

## XXI

Now Christ bless you with the onelight  
 Which goes shining night and day !  
 May the flowers which grow in sunlight  
 Shed their fragrance in your way !  
 Is it not right to remember  
 All your kindness, friend of mine,  
 When we two sat in the chamber,  
 And the poets poured us wine ?

## XXII

So, to come back to the drinking  
 Of this Cyprus,—it is well.  
 But those memories, to my thinking,  
 Make a better oenomei ;  
 And whoever be the speaker,  
 None can murmur with a sigh,  
 That, in drinking from *that* beaker,  
 I am sipping like a fly.

A RHAPSODY OF LIFE'S  
PROGRESS

Fill all the stops of life with tuneful breath.  
CORNELIUS MATHEWS, *Poems of Man*¹.

## I

We are borne into life—it is sweet, it is strange.  
We lie still on the knee of a mild Mystery,  
Which smiles with a change!  
But we doubt not of changes, we know not of spaces,  
The Heavens seem as near as our own mother's face is,  
And we think we could touch all the stars that we see;  
And the milk of our mother is white on our mouth;  
And, with small childish hands, we are turning around  
The apple of Life which another has found;  
It is warm with our touch, not with sun of the south,  
And we count, as we turn it, the red side for four.  
O Life, O Beyond,  
Thou art sweet, thou art strange evermore!

## II

Then all things look strange in the pure golden ether:  
We walk through the gardens with hands linked together,  
And the lilies look large as the trees;  
And as loud as the birds sing the bloom-loving bees,  
And the birds sing like angels, so mystical-fine,  
And the cedars are brushing the arch-angels' feet,  
And time is eternity, love is divine,  
And the world is complete.  
Now, God bless the child,—father, mother, respond!  
O Life, O Beyond,  
Thou art strange, thou art sweet.

¹ A small volume, by an American poet—as remarkable in thought and manner for a vital sinewy vigour as the right arm of 'Pathfinder.' [1844.]

## III

Then we leap on the earth with the armour of youth,  
And the earth rings again,  
And we breathe out, 'O beauty,'—we cry out, 'O truth,'  
And the bloom of our lips drops with wine,  
And our blood runs amazed 'neath the calm hyaline,  
The earth cleaves to the foot, the sun burns to the brain,—  
What is this exultation? and what this despair?—  
The strong pleasure is smiting the nerves into pain,  
And we drop from the Fair as we climb to the Fair,  
And we lie in a trance at its feet;  
And the breath of an angel cold-piercing the air  
Breathes fresh on our faces in swoon,  
And we think him so near he is this side the sun,  
And we wake to a whisper self-murmured and fond,  
O Life, O Beyond,  
Thou art strange, thou art sweet!

## IV

And the winds and the waters in pastoral measures  
Go winding around us, with roll upon roll,  
Till the soul lies within in a circle of pleasures  
Which hideth the soul.  
And we run with the stag, and we leap with the horse,  
And we swim with the fish through the broad water-course,  
And we strike with the falcon, and hunt with the hound,  
And the joy which is in us flies out by a wound.  
And we shout so aloud, 'We exult, we rejoice,'  
That we lose the low moan of our brothers around;  
And we shout so adeep down creation's profound,  
We are deaf to God's voice.  
And we bind the rose-garland on forehead and ears

Yet we are not ashamed,  
And the dew of the roses that runneth  
unblamed

Down our cheeks, is not taken for tears.  
Help us, God, trust us, man, love us,  
woman! 'I hold

Thy small head in my hands,—with its  
grapelets of gold

Growing bright through my fingers,—  
like altar for oath,

'Neath the vast golden spaces like wit-  
nessing faces

That watch the eternity strong in the  
troth—

I love thee; I leave thee,  
Live for thee, die for thee!

I prove thee, deceive thee,  
Undo evermore thee!

Help me, God, slay me, man!—one is  
mourning for both.'

And we stand up, though young, near the  
funeral-sheet

Which covers the Caesar and old Phara-  
mond,

And death is so nigh us, life cools from  
its heat.

O Life, O Beyond,  
*Art* thou fair,—*art* thou sweet?

## v

Then we act to a purpose—we spring up  
erect:

We will tame the wild mouths of the  
wilderness-steeds,

We will plough up the deep in the ships  
double-decked,

We will build the great cities, and do  
the great deeds,

Strike the steel upon steel, strike the  
soul upon soul,

Strike the dole on the weal, overcoming  
the dole,

Let the cloud meet the cloud in a grand  
thunder-roll!

'While the eagle of Thought rides the  
tempest in scorn,

Who cares if the lightning is burning  
the corn?

Let us sit on the thrones

In a purple sublimity,  
And grind down men's bones

To a pale unanimity.

Speed me, God!—serve me, man!—I am  
god over men

When I speak in my cloud, none shall  
answer again.

'Neath the stripe and the bond,  
Lie and mourn at my feet!—

O thou Life, O Beyond,  
Thou art strange, thou art sweet!

## vi

Then we grow into thought,—and with  
inward ascensions

Touch the bounds of our Being.

We lie in the dark here, swathed doubly  
around

With our sensual relations and social  
conventions,

Yet are 'ware of a sight, yet are 'ware  
of a sound

Beyond Hearing and Seeing,—

Are aware that a Hades rolls deep on all  
sides

With its infinite tides

About and above us,—until the strong  
arch

Of our life creaks and bends as if ready  
for falling,

And through the dim rolling we hear  
the sweet calling

Of spirits that speak in a soft under-tongue  
The sense of the mystical march.

And we cry to them softly, 'Come  
nearer, come nearer,

And lift up the lap of this Dark, and  
speak clearer,

And teach us the song that ye sung.'

And we smile in our thought if they  
answer or no,

For to dream of a sweetness is sweet as  
to know.

Wonders breathe in our face

And we ask not their name;

Love takes all the blame

Of the world's prison-place.

And we sing back the songs as we guess  
them, aloud;

And we send up the lark of our music  
that cuts

Untired through the cloud,

To beat with its wings at the lattice  
Heaven shuts;

Yet the angels look down and the mortals  
look up

As the little wings beat,  
And the poet is blessed with their pity  
or hope.  
'Twixt the heavens and the earth *can* a  
poet despond?  
O Life, O Beyond,  
Thou art strange, thou art sweet!

## VII

Then we wring from our souls their  
applicative strength,  
And bend to the cord the strong bow of  
our ken,  
And bringing our lives to the level of  
others  
Hold the cup we have filled, to their  
uses at length.  
'Help me, God! love me, man! I am  
man among men,  
And my life is a pledge  
Of the ease of another's!'  
From the fire and the water we drive  
out the steam  
With a rush and a roar and the speed of  
a dream;  
And the car without horses, the car with-  
out wings,  
Roars onward and flies  
On its grey iron edge,  
'Neath the heat of a Thought sitting still  
in our eyes:  
And our hand knots in air, with the  
bridge that it flings,  
Two peaks far disrupted by ocean and  
skies,  
And, lifting a fold of the smooth-flowing  
Thames,  
Draws under the world with its turmoils  
and potthers,  
While the swans float on softly, un-  
touched in their calms  
By humanity's hum at the root of the  
springs.  
And with reachings of Thought we reach  
down to the deeps  
Of the souls of our brothers,—  
We teach them full words with our slow-  
moving lips,  
'God,' 'Liberty,' 'Truth,'—which they  
hearken and think  
And work into harmony, link upon link,

Till the silver meets round the earth gelid  
and dense,  
Shedding sparks of electric responding  
intense  
On the dark of eclipse.  
Then we hear through the silence and  
glory afar,  
As from shores of a star  
In aphelion, the new generations that cry  
Disenthralled by our voice to harmonious  
reply,  
'God,' 'Liberty,' 'Truth!'  
We are glorious forsooth—  
And our name has a seat,  
Though the shroud should be donned.  
O Life, O Beyond,  
Thou art strange, thou art sweet!

## VIII

Help me, God—help me, man! I am low,  
I am weak—  
Death loosens my sinews and creeps in  
my veins:  
My body is cleft by these wedges of pains  
From my spirit's serene,  
And I feel the externe and insensate  
creep in  
On my organized clay.  
I sob not, nor shriek,  
Yet I faint fast away!  
I am strong in the spirit, — deep-  
thoughted, clear-eyed,—  
I could walk, step for step, with an  
angel beside,  
On the heaven-heights of truth!  
Oh, the soul keeps its youth,  
But the body faints sore, it is tired in  
the race,  
It sinks from the chariot ere reaching  
the goal,  
It is weak, it is cold,  
The rein drops from its hold—  
It sinks back, with the death in its face.  
On, chariot—on, soul,  
Ye are all the more fleet—  
Be alone at the goal  
Of the strange and the sweet!

## IX

Love us, God, love us, man! we believe,  
we achieve—  
Let us love, let us live,

For the acts correspond ;  
 We are glorious—and die !  
 And again on the knee of a mild Mystery  
 That smiles with a change,  
 Here we lie.  
 O DEATH, O BEYOND,  
 Thou art sweet, thou art strange !

### A LAY OF THE EARLY ROSE

— discordance that can accord.  
*Romaunt of the Rose.*

A ROSE once grew within  
 A garden April-green,  
 In her loneliness, in her loneliness,  
 And the fairer for that oneness.

A white rose delicate  
 On a tall bough and straight :  
 Early comer, early comer,  
 Never waiting for the summer.

Her pretty gestes did win  
 South winds to let her in,  
 In her loneliness, in her loneliness,  
 All the fairer for that oneness.

'For if I wait,' said she,  
 'Till time for roses be,—  
 For the moss-rose and the musk-rose,  
 Maiden-blush and royal-dusk rose,—

'What glory then for me  
 In such a company ?—  
 Roses plenty, roses plenty,  
 And one nightingale for twenty ?

'Nay, let me in,' said she,  
 'Before the rest are free,—  
 In my loneliness, in my loneliness,  
 All the fairer for that oneness.

'For I would lonely stand  
 Uplifting my white hand,  
 On a mission, on a mission,  
 To declare the coming vision.

'Upon which lifted sign,  
 What worship will be mine ?  
 What addressing, what caressing,  
 And what thanks and praise and blessing !

'A windlike joy will rush  
 Through every tree and bush,  
 Bending softly in affection  
 And spontaneous benediction.

'Insects, that only may  
 Live in a sunbright ray,  
 To my whiteness, to my whiteness,  
 Shall be drawn, as to a brightness,—

'And every moth and bee,  
 Approach me reverently,  
 Wheeling o'er me, wheeling o'er me,  
 Coronals of motioned glory.

'Three larks shall leave a cloud,  
 To my whiter beauty vowed,  
 Singing gladly all the moontide,  
 Never waiting for the suntide.

'Ten nightingales shall flee  
 Their woods for love of me,  
 Singing sadly all the suntide,  
 Never waiting for the moontide.

'I ween the very skies  
 Will look down with surprise,  
 When low on earth they see me  
 With my starry aspect dreamy.

'And earth will call her flowers  
 To hasten out of doors ;  
 By their curtsies and sweet-smelling,  
 To give grace to my foretelling.'

So praying, did she win  
 South winds to let her in,  
 In her loneliness, in her loneliness,  
 And the fairer for that oneness.

But ah,—alas for her !  
 No thing did minister  
 To her praises, to her praises,  
 More than might unto a daisy's.

No tree nor bush was seen  
 To boast a perfect green,  
 Scarcely having, scarcely having  
 One leaf broad enough for waving.

The little flies did crawl  
 Along the southern wall,  
 Faintly shifting, faintly shifting  
 Wings scarce long enough for lifting.

The lark, too high or low,  
I ween, did miss her so,  
With his nest down in the gorses,  
And his song in the star-courses.

The nightingale did please  
To loiter beyond seas:  
Guess him in the Happy Islands,  
Learning music from the silence.

Only the bee, forsooth,  
Came in the place of both,  
Doing honour, doing honour  
To the honey-dews upon her.

The skies looked coldly down  
As on a royal crown;  
Then with drop for drop, at leisure,  
They began to rain for pleasure.

Whereat the Earth did seem  
To waken from a dream,  
Winter-frozen, winter-frozen,  
Her unquiet eyes unclosing—

Said to the Rose, 'Ha, Snow!  
And art thou fallen so?  
Thou, who wast enthroned stately  
All along my mountains lately?

'Holla, thou world-wide snow!  
And art thou wasted so?  
With a little bough to catch thee,  
And a little bee to watch thee?'

—Poor Rose, to be misknown!  
Would she had ne'er been blown,  
In her loneliness, in her loneliness,  
All the sadder for that oneness!

Some word she tried to say,  
Some *no* . . . ah, wellaway!  
But the passion did o'ercome her,  
And the fair frail leaves dropped from her.

Dropped from her, fair and mute,  
Close to a poet's foot,  
Who beheld them, smiling slowly,  
As at something sad yet holy,—

Said, 'Verily and thus  
It chances too with *us*  
Poets, singing sweetest snatches  
While that deaf men keep the watches:

'Vaunting to come before  
Our own age evermore,  
In a loneliness, in a loneliness,  
And the nobler for that oneness.

'Holy in voice and heart,  
To high ends, set apart!  
All unmated, all unmated,  
Just because so consecrated.

'But if alone we be,  
Where is our empery?  
And if none can reach our stature,  
Who can mete our lofty nature?

'What bell will yield a tone,  
Swung in the air alone?  
If no brazen clapper bringing,  
Who can hear the chimed ringing?

'What angel, but would seem  
To sensual eyes, ghost-dim?  
And without assimilation,  
Vain is interpenetration.

'And thus, what can we do,  
Poor rose and poet too,  
Who both antedate our mission  
In an unprepared season?

'Drop leaf—be silent song!  
Cold things we come among:  
We must warm them, we must warm  
them,  
Ere we ever hope to charm them.

'Howbeit' (here his face  
Lightened around the place,—  
So to mark the outward turning  
Of his spirit's inward burning)

'Something it is, to hold  
In God's worlds manifold,  
First revealed to creature-duty,  
Some new form of His mild Beauty.

'Whether that form respect  
The sense or intellect,  
Holy be, in mood or meadow,  
The Chief Beauty's sign and shadow!

'Holy, in me and thee,  
Rose fallen from the tree,—  
Though the world stand dumb around us,  
All unable to expound us.

'Though none us deign to bless,  
Blessèd are we, nathless;  
Blessèd still and consecrated,  
In that, rose, we were created.

'Oh, shame to poet's lays,  
Sung for the dole of praise,—  
Hoarsely sung upon the highway  
With that *obolum da mihi*!

'Shame, shame to poet's soul  
Pining for such a dole,  
When Heaven-chosen to inherit  
The high throne of a chief spirit!

'Sit still upon your thrones,  
O ye poetic ones!  
And if, sooth, the world decry you,  
Let it pass unchallenged by you!

'Ye to yourselves suffice,  
Without its flatteries.  
Self-contentedly approve you  
Unto Him who sits above you,—

'In prayers—that upward mount  
Like to a fair-sunned fount  
Which, in gushing back upon you,  
Hath an upper music won you.

'In faith—that still perceives  
No rose can shed her leaves,  
Far less, poet fall from mission,  
With an unfulfilled fruition.

'In hope—that apprehends  
An end beyond these ends,  
And great uses rendered duly  
By the meanest song sung truly.

'In thanks—for all the good  
By poets understood—  
For the sound of seraphs moving  
Down the hidden depths of loving,—

'For sights of things away  
Through fissures of the clay,  
Promised things which *shall* be given  
And sung over, up in Heaven,—

'For life, so lovely-vain,  
For death, which breaks the chain,—  
For this sense of present sweetness,—  
And this yearning to completeness!'

## THE POET AND THE BIRD

### A FABLE

#### I

SAID a people to a poet—'Go out from  
among us straightway!  
While we are thinking earthly things,  
thou singest of divine.  
There's a little fair brown nightingale,  
who, sitting in the gateway,  
Makes fitter music to our ear than any  
song of thine!'

#### II

The poet went out weeping—the nightin-  
gale ceased chanting,  
'Now, wherefore, O thou nightingale,  
is all thy sweetness done?'  
—'I cannot sing my earthly things, the  
heavenly poet wanting,  
Whose highest harmony includes the  
lowest under sun.'

#### III

The poet went out weeping,—and died  
abroad, bereft there:  
The bird flew to his grave and died  
amid a thousand wails.  
And, when I last came by the place,  
I swear the music left there  
Was only of the poet's song, and not  
the nightingale's.

## THE CRY OF THE HUMAN

#### I

'THERE is no God,' the foolish saith,  
But none 'There is no sorrow,'  
And nature oft the cry of faith  
In bitter need will borrow:  
Eyes, which the preacher could not  
school,  
By wayside graves are raised,  
And lips say 'God be pitiful,'  
Who ne'er said 'God be praised.'  
Be pitiful, O God!

## II

The tempest stretches from the steep  
 The shadow of its coming,  
 The beasts grow tame, and near us creep,  
 As help were in the human;  
 Yet, while the cloud-wheels roll and  
 grind,  
 We spirits tremble under!—  
 The hills have echoes, but we find  
 No answer for the thunder.  
 Be pitiful, O God!

## III

The battle hurtles on the plains,  
 Earth feels new scythes upon her;  
 We reap our brothers for the wains,  
 And call the harvest—honour;  
 Draw face to face, front line to line,  
 One image all inherit,—  
 Then kill, curse on, by that same sign,  
 Clay, clay,—and spirit, spirit.  
 Be pitiful, O God!

## IV

The plague runs festering through the  
 town,  
 And never a bell is tolling,  
 And corpses, jostled 'neath the moon,  
 Nod to the dead-cart's rolling.  
 The young child calleth for the cup,  
 The strong man brings it weeping;  
 The mother from her babe looks up,  
 And shrieks away its sleeping.  
 Be pitiful, O God!

## V

The plague of gold strikes far and near,  
 And deep and strong it enters;  
 This purple chimar which we wear  
 Makes madder than the centaur's:  
 Our thoughts grow blank, our words  
 grow strange,  
 We cheer the pale gold-diggers—  
 Each soul is worth so much on 'Change,  
 And marked, like sheep, with figures.  
 Be pitiful, O God!

## VI

The curse of gold upon the land  
 The lack of bread enforces;  
 The rail-cars snort from strand to strand,  
 Like more of Death's white horses!

The rich preach 'rights' and future days,  
 And hear no angel scoffing,—  
 The poor die mute—with starving gaze  
 On corn-ships in the offing.  
 Be pitiful, O God!

## VII

We meet together at the feast,  
 To private mirth betake us;  
 We stare down in the winecup, lest  
 Some vacant chair should shake us.  
 We name delight, and pledge it round—  
 'It shall be ours to-morrow!'  
 God's seraphs, do your voices sound  
 As sad in naming sorrow?  
 Be pitiful, O God!

## VIII

We sit together, with the skies,  
 The steadfast skies, above us,  
 We look into each other's eyes,  
 'And how long will you love us?'—  
 The eyes grow dim with prophecy,  
 The voices, low and breathless,—  
 'Till death us part!'—O words, to be  
 Our *best*, for love the deathless!  
 Be pitiful, O God!

## IX

We tremble by the harmless bed  
 Of one loved and departed:  
 Our tears drop on the lips that said  
 Last night, 'Be stronger-hearted!'  
 O God,—to clasp those fingers close,  
 And yet to feel so lonely!—  
 To see a light upon such brows,  
 Which is the daylight only!  
 Be pitiful, O God!

## X

The happy children come to us,  
 And look up in our faces:  
 They ask us—Was it thus, and thus,  
 When we were in their places?—  
 We cannot speak;—we see anew  
 The hills we used to live in,  
 And feel our mother's smile press through  
 The kisses she is giving.  
 Be pitiful, O God!

## XI

We pray together at the kirk,  
 For mercy, mercy, solely:  
 Hands weary with the evil work,  
 We lift them to the Holy.

The corpse is calm below our knee,  
 Its spirit, bright before Thee—  
 Between them, worse than either, we—  
 Without the rest of glory!  
 Be pitiful, O God!

## XII

We leave the communing of men,  
 The murmur of the passions,  
 And live alone, to live again  
 With endless generations.  
 Are we so brave?—The sea and sky  
 In silence lift their mirrors,  
 And, glassed therein, our spirits high  
 Recoil from their own terrors.  
 Be pitiful, O God!

## XIII

We sit on hills our childhood wist,  
 Woods, hamlets, streams, beholding :  
 The sun strikes through the farthest mist,  
 The city's spire to golden.  
 The city's golden spire it was,  
 When hope and health were strongest,  
 But now it is the churchyard grass  
 We look upon the longest.  
 Be pitiful, O God!

## XIV

And soon all vision waxeth dull—  
 Men whisper, 'He is dying':  
 We cry no more 'Be pitiful!'  
 We have no strength for crying.  
 No strength, no need. Then, soul of mine,  
 Look up and triumph rather—  
 Lo, in the depth of God's Divine,  
 The Son adjoins the Father,  
 BE PITIFUL, O GOD!

## A PORTRAIT

One name is Elizabeth.—BEN JONSON.

I WILL paint her as I see her.  
 Ten times have the lilies blown,  
 Since she looked upon the sun.

And her face is lily-clear,  
 Lily-shaped, and dropped in duty  
 To the law of its own beauty.

Oval cheeks encoloured faintly,  
 Which a trail of golden hair  
 Keeps from fading off to air :

And a forehead fair and saintly,  
 Which two blue eyes undershine,  
 Like meek prayers before a shrine.

Face and figure of a child,—  
 Thought too calm, you think, and tender,  
 For the childhood you would lend her.

Yet child simple, undefiled,  
 Frank, obedient,—waiting still  
 On the turnings of your will.

Moving light, as all young things,  
 As young birds, or early wheat,  
 When the wind blows over it.

Only, free from flutterings  
 Of loud mirth that scorneth measure—  
 Taking love for her chief pleasure.

Choosing pleasures, for the rest,  
 Which come softly—just as she,  
 When she nestles at your knee.

Quiet talk she liketh best,  
 In a bower of gentle looks,—  
 Watering flowers, or reading books.

And her voice, it murmurs lowly,  
 As a silver stream may run,  
 Which yet feels, you feel, the sun.

And her smile, it seems half holy,  
 As if drawn from thoughts more far  
 Than our common jestings are.

And if any poet knew her,  
 He would sing of her with falls  
 Used in lovely madrigals.

And if any painter drew her,  
 He would paint her unaware  
 With a halo round the hair.

And if reader read the poem,  
 He would whisper—'You have done a  
 Consecrated little Una.'

And a dreamer (did you show him  
 That same picture) would exclaim,  
 'Tis my angel, with a name!'

And a stranger, when he sees her  
 In the street even—smileth stilly,  
 Just as you would at a lily.

And all voices that address her,  
Softened, sleeken every word,  
As if speaking to a bird.

And all fancies yearn to cover  
The hard earth whereon she passes,  
With the thymy scented grasses.

And all hearts do pray, 'God love her!'—  
Aye, and always, in good sooth,  
We may all be sure HE NOTH.

## CONFESSIONS

## I

FACE to face in my chamber, my silent  
chamber, I saw her:  
God and she and I only, . . . there, I sate  
down to draw her  
Soul through the clefts of confession. . .  
Speak, I am holding thee fast,  
As the angels of resurrection shall do it  
at the last.  
'My cup is blood-red  
With my sin,' she said,  
'And I pour it out to the bitter lees,  
As if the angels of judgement stood over  
me strong at the last,  
Or as thou wert as these!'

## II

When God smote His hands together,  
and struck out thy soul as a spark  
Into the organized glory of things, from  
deeps of the dark,—  
Say, didst thou shine, didst thou burn,  
didst thou honour the power in  
the form,  
As the star does at night, or the fire-fly,  
or even the little ground-worm?  
'I have sinned,' she said,  
'For my seed-light shed  
Has smouldered away from His first  
decrees!  
The cypress praiseth the fire-fly, the  
ground-leaf praiseth the  
worm,—  
I am viler than these!'

## III

When God on that sin had pity, and  
did not trample thee straight  
With His wild rains beating and drenching  
thy light found inadequate;

When He only sent thee the north-  
winds, a little searching and chill,  
To quicken thy flame . . . didst thou kindle  
and flash to the heights of His  
will?

'I have sinned,' she said,  
'Unquickened, unspread  
My fire dropt down, and I wept on  
my knees!  
I only said of His winds of the north as  
I shrank from their chill, . . .  
What delight is in these?'

## IV

When God on that sin had pity, and did  
not meet it as such,  
But tempered the wind to thy uses, and  
softened the world to thy touch,  
At least thou wast moved in thy soul,  
though unable to prove it afar,  
Thou couldst carry thy light like a jewel,  
not giving it out like a star!  
'I have sinned,' she said,  
'And not merited  
The gift He gives, by the grace He sees!  
The mine-cave praiseth the jewel, the  
hillside praiseth the star;  
I am viler than these.'

## V

Then I cried aloud in my passion, . . .  
Unthankful and impotent creature,  
To throw up thy scorn unto God through  
the rents in thy beggarly nature!  
If He, the all-giving and loving, is  
served so unduly, what then  
Hast thou done to the weak and the false,  
and the changing, . . . thy fellows  
of men?  
'I have loved,' she said,  
(Words bowing her head  
As the wind the wet acacia-trees!)  
'I saw God sitting above me,—but I . . .  
I sate among men,  
And I have loved these.'

## VI

Again with a lifted voice, like a choral  
trumpet that takes  
The lowest note of a viol that trembles,  
and triumphing breaks

On the air with it solemn and clear,—  
‘Behold! I have sinned not in this!

Where I loved, I have loved much and well,—I have verily loved not amiss.

Let the living,’ she said,

‘Inquire of the Dead,

In the house of the pale-fronted Images:  
My own true dead will answer for me,  
that I have not loved amiss

In my love for all these.

## VII

‘The least touch of their hands in the morning, I keep it by day and by night;

Their least step on the stair, at the door,  
still throbs through me, if ever so light;

Their least gift, which they left to my childhood, far off, in the long-ago years,

Is now turned from a toy to a relic, and seen through the crystals of tears.

Dig the snow,’ she said,

‘For my churchyard bed,

Yet I, as I sleep, shall not fear to freeze,  
If one only of these my beloveds, shall love me with heart-warm tears,

As I have loved these!

## VIII.

‘If I angered any among them, from thenceforth my own life was sore;

If I fell by chance from their presence,  
I clung to their memory more.

Their tender I often felt holy, their bitter I sometimes called sweet;  
And whenever their heart has refused me, I fell down straight at their feet.

I have loved,’ she said,—

‘Man is weak, God is dread,

Yet the weak man dies with his spirit at ease,

Having poured such an unguent of love, but once on the Saviour’s feet,  
As I lavished for these.’

## IX

‘Go,’ I cried, ‘thou hast chosen the Human, and left the Divine!

Then, at least, have the Human shared with thee their wild berry-wine!

Have they loved back thy love, and when strangers approached thee with blame,

Have they covered thy fault with their kisses, and loved thee the same?’

But she shrunk and said,

‘God, over my head,

Must sweep in the wrath of his judgement-seas,

If He shall deal with me sinning, but only indeed the same

And no gentler than these.’

## LOVED ONCE

## I

I clasped, appraising once,  
Earth’s lamentable sounds,—the welladay,

The jarring yea and nay,  
The fall of kisses on unanswering clay,  
The sobbed farewell, the welcome mournfuller,—

But all did leaven the air  
With a less bitter leaven of sure despair  
Than these words—‘I loved ONCE.’

## II

And who saith ‘I loved ONCE’?  
Not angels,—whose clear eyes, love, love foresee,

Love, through eternity,  
And by To Love do apprehend To Be.  
Not God, called Love, His noble crown-name, casting

A light too broad for blasting!  
The great God changing not from everlasting,  
Saith never ‘I loved ONCE.’

## III

Oh, never is ‘Loved ONCE’  
Thy word, thou Victim-Christ, misprized friend!

Thy cross and curse may rend,  
But having loved Thou lovest to the end.

This is man's saying—man's. Too weak  
to move

One spherèd star above,  
Man desecrates the eternal God-word  
Love  
By his No More, and Once.

## IV

How say ye 'We loved once,'  
Blasphemers? Is your earth not cold  
enow,

Mourners, without that snow?  
Ah, friends! and would ye wrong each  
other so?

And could ye say of some whose love is  
known,

Whose prayers have met your own,  
Whose tears have fallen for you, whose  
smiles have shone

So long,—'We loved them ONCE'?

## V

Could ye 'We loved her once'  
Say calm of me, sweet friends, when  
out of sight?

When hearts of better right  
Stand in between me and your happy  
light?

Or when, as flowers kept too long in  
the shade,

Ye find my colours fade,  
And all that is not love in me, decayed?  
Such words—Ye loved me ONCE!

## VI

Could ye 'We loved her once'  
Say cold of me when further put away  
In earth's sepulchral clay,—

When mute the lips which deprecate  
to-day?

Not so! not then—least then. When  
life is shriven,

And death's full joy is given,—  
Of those who sit and love you up in  
heaven,

Say not 'We loved them once.'

## VII

Say never, ye loved ONCE.  
God is too near above, the grave, beneath,  
And all our moments breathe  
Too quick in mysteries of life and death,

For such a word. The eternities avenge  
Affections light of range.

There comes no change to justify that  
change,

Whatever comes—Loved ONCE!

## VIII

And yet that same word ONCE  
Is humanly acceptive. Kings have said,  
Shaking a discrowned head,

'We ruled once,'—dotards, 'We once  
taught and led.'

Cripples once danced i' the vines—and  
bards approved

Were once by scornings moved:  
But love strikes one hour—LOVE! those

never loved

Who dream that they loved ONCE.

## THE HOUSE OF CLOUDS

## I

I WOULD build a cloudy House  
For my thoughts to live in,

When for earth too fancy-loose,  
And too low for heaven.

Hush! I talk my dream aloud;

I build it bright to see,—

I build it on the moonlit cloud

To which I looked with *thee*.

## II

Cloud-walls of the morning's grey,

Faced with amber column,

Crowned with crimson cupola

From a sunset solemn:

May-mists, for the casements, fetch,

Pale and glimmering,

With a sunbeam hid in each,

And a smell of spring.

## III

Build the entrance high and proud,

Darkening and then brightening,

Of a riven thunder-cloud,

Veined by the lightning:

Use one with an iris-stain

For the door within,

Turning to a sound like rain

As I enter in.

## IV

Build a spacious hall thereby,  
 Boldly, never fearing;  
 Use the blue place of the sky  
 Which the wind is clearing;  
 Branched with corridors sublime,  
 Flecked with winding stairs,  
 Such as children wish to climb,  
 Following their own prayers.

## V

In the mutest of the house,  
 I will have my chamber:  
 Silence at the door shall use  
 Evening's light of amber;  
 Solemnizing every mood,  
 Softening in degree,  
 Turning sadness into good  
 As I turn the key.

## VI

Be my chamber tapestried  
 With the showers of summer,  
 Close, but soundless,—glorified  
 When the sunbeams come here;  
 Wandering harpers, harping on  
 Waters stringed for such,  
 Drawing colour, for a tune,  
 With a vibrant touch.

## VII

Bring a shadow green and still  
 From the chestnut forest,  
 Bring a purple from the hill,  
 When the heat is sorest;  
 Spread them out from wall to wall,  
 Carpet-wove around,  
 Whereupon the foot shall fall  
 In light instead of sound.

## VIII

Bring fantastic cloudlets home  
 From the noontide zenith,  
 Ranged for sculptures round the room,  
 Named as Fancy weeneth.  
 Some be Junos, without eyes,  
 Naiads, without sources;  
 Some be birds of paradise,  
 Some, Olympian horses.

## IX

Bring the dews the birds shake off,  
 Waking in the hedges,—  
 Those too, perfumed, for a proof,  
 From the lilies' edges;  
 From our England's field and moor,  
 Bring them calm and white in,  
 Whence to form a mirror pure  
 For Love's self-delighting.

## X

Bring a grey cloud from the east  
 Where the lark is singing  
 (Something of the song at least  
 Unlost in the bringing):  
 That shall be a morning chair  
 Poet-dream may sit in,  
 When it leans out on the air,  
 Unrimed and unwritten.

## XI

Bring the red cloud from the sun!  
 While he sinketh, catch it:  
 That shall be a couch,—with one  
 Sidelong star to watch it,—  
 Fit for Poet's finest thought  
 At the curfew-sounding;  
 Things unseen being nearer brought  
 Than the seen, around him.

## XII

Poet's thought,—not poet's sigh.  
 'Las, they come together!  
 Cloudy walls divide and fly,  
 As in April weather!  
 Cupola and column proud,  
 Structure bright to see,  
 Gone! except that moonlit cloud  
 To which I looked with *thee*.

## XIII

Let them. Wipe such visionings  
 From the fancy's cartel:  
 Love secures some fairer things,  
 Dowered with his immortal.  
 The sun may darken, heaven be bowed,  
 But still unchanged shall be,—  
 Here, in my soul,—that moonlit cloud,  
 To which I looked with *THEE*!

## A SABBATH MORNING AT SEA

## I

THE ship went on with solemn face ;  
To meet the darkness on the deep,  
The solemn ship went onward.  
I bowed down weary in the place,  
For parting tears and present sleep  
Had weighed mine eyelids downward.

## II

Thick sleep which shut all dreams from me,  
And kept my inner self apart  
And quiet from emotion,  
Then brake away and left me free,  
Made conscious of a human heart  
Betwixt the heaven and ocean.

## III

The new sight, the new wondrous sight!  
The waters round me, turbulent,—  
The skies impassive o'er me,  
Calm, in a moonless, sunless light,  
Half glorified by that intent  
Of holding the day-glory!

## IV

Two pale thin clouds did stand upon  
The meeting line of sea and sky,  
With aspect still and mystic.  
I think they did foresee the sun,  
And rested on their prophecy  
In quietude majestic,

## V

Then flushed to radiance where they stood,  
Like statues by the open tomb  
Of shining saints half risen.—  
The sun!—he came up to be viewed,  
And sky and sea made mighty room  
To inaugurate the vision.

## VI

I oft had seen the dawnlight run,  
As red wine, through the hills, and break  
Through many a mist's inurning;

But, here, no earth profaned the sun!  
Heaven, ocean, did alone partake  
The sacrament of morning.

## VII

Away with thoughts fantastical!  
I would be humble to my worth,  
Self-guarded as self-doubted :  
Though here no earthly shadows fall,  
I, joying, grieving without earth,  
May desecrate without it.

## VIII

God's sabbath morning sweeps the waves ;  
I would not praise the pageant high,  
Yet miss the dedicature.  
I, carried toward the sunless graves  
By force of natural things,—should I  
Exult in only nature?

## IX

And could I bear to sit alone  
'Mid nature's fixed benignities,  
While my warm pulse was moving!  
Too dark thou art, O glittering sun,  
Too strait ye are, capacious seas,  
To satisfy the loving!

## X

It seems a better lot than so,  
To sit with friends beneath the beech,  
And feel them dear and dearer ;  
Or follow children as they go  
In pretty pairs, with softened speech,  
As the church-bells ring nearer.

## XI

Love me, sweet friends, this sabbath day!  
The sea sings round me while ye roll  
Afar the hymn unaltered,  
And kneel, where once I knelt to pray,  
And bless me deeper in the soul,  
Because the voice has faltered.

## XII

And though this sabbath comes to me  
Without the stolèd minister  
Or chanting congregation,  
God's Spirit brings communion, He  
Who brooded soft on waters drear,  
Creator on creation.

## XIII

Himself, I think, shall draw me higher,  
Where keep the saints with harp and song  
An endless sabbath morning,  
And on that sea commixed with fire  
Oft drop their eyelids, raised too long  
To the full Godhead's burning.

## A FLOWER IN A LETTER

## I

My lonely chamber next the sea  
Is full of many flowers set free  
By summer's earliest duty :  
Dear friends upon the garden-walk  
Might stop amid their fondest talk  
To pull the least in beauty.

## II

A thousand flowers—each seeming one  
That learnt by gazing on the sun  
To counterfeit his shining ;  
Within whose leaves the holy dew  
That falls from heaven, has won anew  
A glory, in declining.

## III

Red roses, used to praises long,  
Contented with the poet's song,  
The nightingale's being over ;  
And lilies white, prepared to touch  
The whitest thought, nor soil it much,  
Of dreamer turned to lover.

## IV

Deep violets, you liken to  
The kindest eyes that look on you,  
Without a thought disloyal ;  
And cactuses a queen might don,  
If weary of a golden crown,  
And still appear as royal.

## V

Pansies for ladies all—(I wis  
That none who wear such brooches, miss  
A jewel in the mirror) ;  
And tulips, children love to stretch  
Their fingers down, to feel in each  
Its beauty's secret nearer.

## VI

Love's language may be talked with  
these ;  
To work out choicest sentences  
No blossoms can be meetier ;  
And, such being used in Eastern bowers,  
Young maids may wonder if the flowers  
Or meanings be the sweeter.

## VII

And such being strewn before a bride,  
Her little foot may turn aside,  
Their longer bloom decreeing,  
Unless some voice's whispered sound  
Should make her gaze upon the ground  
Too earnestly—for seeing.

## VIII

And such being scattered on a grave,  
Whoever mourneth there, may have  
A type which seemeth worthy  
Of that fair body hid below,  
Which bloomed on earth a time ago,  
Then perished as the earthy.

## IX

And such being wreathed for worldly  
feast,  
Across the brimming cup some guest  
Their rainbow colours viewing,  
May feel them, with a silent start,  
The covenant, his childish heart  
With nature made,—renewing.

## X

No flowers our gardened England hath  
To match with these, in bloom and breath,  
Which from the world are hiding,  
In sunny Devon moist with rills,—  
A nunnery of cloistered hills,  
The elements presiding.

## XI

By Loddon's stream the flowers are fair  
That meet one gifted lady's care  
With prodigal rewarding  
(For Beauty is too used to run  
To Mitford's bower—to want the sun  
To light her through the garden).

## XII

But, here, all summers are comprised—  
The nightly frosts shrink exorcised  
Before the priestly moonshine ;  
And every wind with stoléd feet,  
In wandering down the alleys sweet,  
Steps lightly on the sunshine,

## XIII

And (having promised Harpocrate  
Among the nodding roses, that  
No harm shall touch his daughters)  
Gives quite away the rushing sound,  
He dares not use upon such ground,  
To ever-trickling waters.

## XIV

Yet, sun and wind ! what can ye do  
But make the leaves more brightly show  
In posies newly gathered ?  
I look away from all your best,  
To one poor flower unlike the rest,  
A little flower half-withered.

## XV

I do not think it ever was  
A pretty flower,—to make the grass  
Look greener where it reddened ;  
And now it seems ashamed to be.  
Alone, in all this company,  
Of aspect shrunk and saddened.

## XVI

A chamber-window was the spot  
It grew in, from a garden-pot,  
Among the city shadows.  
If any, tending it, might seem  
To smile, 'twas only in a dream  
Of nature in the meadows.

## XVII

How coldly on its head did fall  
The sunshine, from the city wall  
In pale refraction driven !  
How sadly, plashed upon its leaves,  
The raindrops, losing in the eaves  
The first sweet news of heaven !

## XVIII

And those who planted, gathered it  
In gamesome or in loving fit,  
And sent it as a token  
Of what their city pleasures be,—  
For one, in Devon by the sea  
And garden-blooms, to look on.

## XIX

But SHE, for whom the jest was meant,  
With a grave passion innocent  
Receiving what was given,—  
Oh, if her face she turned then,  
Let none say 'twas to gaze again  
Upon the flowers of Devon !

## XX

Because, whatever virtue dwells  
In genial skies, warm oracles  
For gardens brightly springing,—  
The flower which grew beneath your  
eyes,  
Beloved friends, to mine supplies  
A beauty worthier singing !

## THE MASK.

## I

I HAVE a smiling face, she said,  
I have a jest for all I meet,  
I have a garland for my head  
And all its flowers are sweet,—  
And so you call me gay, she said.

## II

Grief taught to me this smile, she said,  
And Wrong did teach this jesting bold ;  
These flowers were plucked from garden-  
bed  
While a death-chime was tolled.  
And what now will you say ?—she said.

## III

Behind no prison-grate, she said,  
Which slurs the sunshine half a mile,  
Live captives so uncomfórted  
As souls behind a smile.  
God's pity let us pray, she said.

## IV

I know my face is bright, she said,—  
Such brightness, dying suns diffuse ;  
I bear upon my forehead shed  
The sign of what I lose,—  
The ending of my day, she said.

## V

If I dared leave this smile, she said,  
And take a moan upon my mouth,  
And tie a cypress round my head,  
And let my tears run smooth,—  
It were the happier way, she said.

## VI

And since that must not be, she said,  
I fain your bitter world would leave.  
How calmly, calmly, smile the Dead,  
Who do not, therefore, grieve!  
The yea of Heaven is yea, she said.

## VII

But in your bitter world, she said,  
Face-joy's a costly mask to wear.  
'Tis bought with pangs long nourished,  
And rounded to despair.  
Grief's earnest makes life's play, she said.

## VIII

Ye weep for those who weep? she said—  
Ah fools! I bid you pass them by.  
Go, weep for those whose hearts have  
bled  
What time their eyes were dry.  
Whom sadder can I say? she said.

## CALLS ON THE HEART

## I

FREE Heart, that singest to-day,  
Like a bird on the first green spray,  
Wilt thou go forth to the world,  
Where the hawk hath his wing un-  
furled

To follow, perhaps, thy way?  
Where the tamer, thine own will bind,  
And, to make thee sing, will blind,  
While the little hip grows for the free  
behind?

Heart, wilt thou go?

—'No, no!

Free hearts are better so.'

## II

The world, thou hast heard it told,  
Has counted its robber-gold,  
And the pieces stick to the hand.  
The world goes riding it fair and grand,  
While the truth is bought and sold!  
World-voices east, world-voices west,  
They call thee, Heart, from thine early  
rest,

Come hither, come hither and be our  
guest.

Heart, wilt thou go?

—'No, no!

Good hearts are calmer so.'

## III

Who calleth thee, Heart? World's  
Strife,

With a golden heft to his knife;  
World's Mirth, with a finger fine  
That draws on a board in wine  
Her blood-red plans of life;  
World's Gain, with a brow knit down;  
World's Fame, with a laurel crown,  
Which rustles most as the leaves turn  
brown—

Heart, wilt thou go?

—'No, no!

Calm hearts are wiser so.'

## IV

Hast heard that Proserpina  
(Once fooling) was snatched away,  
To partake the dark king's seat,—  
And that the tears ran fast on her feet  
To think how the sun shone yester-  
day!

With her ankles sunken in asphodel  
She wept for the roses of earth which  
fell

From her lap when the wild car drove  
to hell.

Heart, wilt thou go?

—'No, no!

Wise hearts are warmer so.'

## V

And what is this place not seen,  
Where Hearts may hide serene?  
'Tis a fair still house well-kept,  
Which humble thoughts have swept,  
And holy prayers made clean.  
There, I sit with Love in the sun,  
And we two never have done  
Singing sweeter songs than are guessed  
by one.

Heart, wilt thou go?

—'No, no!

Warm hearts are fuller so.'

## VI

O Heart, O Love,—I fear  
That Love may be kept too near.  
Hast heard, O Heart, that tale,  
How Love may be false and frail  
To a heart once holden dear?  
—'But this true Love of mine  
Clings fast as the clinging vine,

And mingles pure as the grapes in wine.  
Heart, wilt thou go?  
—'No, no!  
Full hearts beat higher so.'

## VII

O Heart, O Love, beware!—  
Look up, and boast not there.  
For who has twirled at the pin?  
'Tis the World, between Death and  
Sin,—  
The World, and the world's  
Despair!  
And Death has quickened his pace  
To the hearth, with a mocking face,  
Familiar as Love, in Love's own place—  
Heart, wilt thou go!  
—'Still, no!  
High hearts must grieve even so.'

## VIII

The house is waste to-day,—  
The leaf has dropt from the spray,  
The thorn, prickt through to the song.  
If summer doeth no wrong  
The winter will, they say.  
Sing, Heart! what heart replies?  
In vain we were calm and wise,  
If the tears unkind stand on our eyes.  
Heart, wilt thou go?  
—'Ah, no!  
Grieved hearts must break even so.'

## IX

Howbeit all is not lost.  
The warm noon ends in frost,  
And worldly tongues of promise,  
Like sheep-bells, die off from us  
On the desert hills cloud-crossed!  
Yet, through the silence, shall  
Pierce the death-angel's call,  
And 'Come up hither,' recover all.  
Heart, wilt thou go?  
—'I go!  
Broken hearts triumph so.'

## WISDOM UNAPPLIED

## I

If I were thou, O butterfly,  
And poised my purple wing to spy  
The sweetest flowers that live and die,

## II

I would not waste my strength on those,  
As thou,—for summer has a close,  
And pansies bloom not in the snows.

## III

If I were thou, O working bee,  
And all that honey-gold I see  
Could delve from roses easily,

## IV

I would not hive it at man's door.  
As thou,—that heirdom of my store  
Should make him rich, and leave me poor.

## V

If I were thou, O eagle proud,  
And screamed the thunder back aloud,  
And faced the lightning from the cloud,

## VI

I would not build my eyrie-throne,  
As thou,—upon a crumbling stone,  
Which the next storm may trample down.

## VII

If I were thou, O gallant steed,  
With pawing hoof, and dancing head,  
And eye outrunning thine own speed,

## VIII

I would not meeken to the rein,  
As thou,—nor smooth my nostril plain  
From the glad desert's snort and strain.

## IX

If I were thou, red-breasted bird,  
With song at shut-up window heard,  
Like Love's sweet yes too long deferred,

## X

I would not overstay delight,  
As thou,—but take a swallow-flight,  
Till the new spring returned to sight.

## XI

While yet I spake, a touch was laid  
Upon my brow, whose pride did fade  
As thus, methought, an angel said,—

## XII

'If I were *thou* who sing'st this song,  
Most wise for others, and most strong  
In seeing right while doing wrong,

## XIII

'I would not waste my cares, and choose,  
As *thou*,—to seek what thou must lose,  
Such gains as perish in the use.

## XIV

'I would not work where none can win,  
As *thou*,—half way 'twixt grief and sin,  
But look above, and judge within.

## XV

'I would not let my pulse beat high,  
As *thou*,—towards fame's regality,  
Nor yet in love's great jeopardy.

## XVI

'I would not champ the hard cold bit,  
As *thou*,—of what the world thinks fit,  
But take God's freedom, using it.

## XVII

'I would not play earth's winter out,  
As *thou*,—but gird my soul about,  
And live for life past death and doubt.

## XVIII

'Then sing, O singer!—but allow,  
Beast, fly, and bird, called foolish now,  
Are wise (for all thy scorn) as thou!'

## MEMORY AND HOPE

## I

## BACK-LOOKING Memory

And prophet Hope both sprang from out  
the ground;

One, where the flashing of Cherubic  
sword

Fell sad, in Eden's ward,—

And one, from Eden earth, within the  
sound

Of the four rivers lapsing pleasantly,  
What time the promise after curse was  
said—

'Thy seed shall bruise his head.'

## II

Poor Memory's brain is wild,  
As moonstruck by that flaming atmo-  
sphere

When she was born. Her deep eyes  
shine and shone

With light that conquereth sun

And stars to wanner paleness year by  
year.

With odorous gums, she mixeth things  
defiled :

She trampleth down earth's grasses green  
and sweet,

With her far-wandering feet.

## III

She plucketh many flowers,  
Their beauty on her bosom's coldness  
killing :

She teacheth every melancholy sound

To winds and waters round :

She droppeth tears with seed where man  
is tilling

The rugged soil in his exhausted hours :  
She smileth—ah me! in her smile doth go  
A mood of deeper woe.

## IV

Hope tripped on out of sight,  
Crowned with an Eden wreath she saw  
not wither,

And went a-nodding through the wilder-  
ness

With brow that shone no less

Than a sea-gull's wing, brought nearer  
by rough weather ;

Searching the treeless rock for fruits of  
light ;

Her fair quick feet being armed from  
stones and cold

By slippers of pure gold.

## V

Memory did Hope much wrong  
And, while she dreamed, her slippers  
stole away ;

But still she wended on with mirth un-  
heeding,

Although her feet were bleeding,  
Till Memory tracked her on a certain day,  
And with most evil eyes did search her  
long

And cruelly, whereat she sank to ground  
In a stark deadly swoond.

## VI

And so my Hope were slain,  
Had it not been that Thou wast standing  
near,

O Thou, who saidst 'live,' to creatures  
lying

In their own blood and dying!

For Thou her forehead to Thine heart didst  
rear  
And make its silent pulses sing again,—  
Pouring a new light o'er her darkened  
eyne,  
With tender tears from Thine !

## VII

Therefore my Hope arose  
From out her swoond and gazed upon  
Thy face,  
And, meeting there that soft subduing  
look

Which Peter's spirit shook,  
Sank downward in a rapture to embrace  
Thy pierced hands and feet with kisses  
close,  
And prayed Thee to assist her evermore  
To 'reach the things before.'

## VIII

Then gavest Thou the smile  
Whence angel-wings thrill quick like  
summer lightning,  
Vouchsafing rest beside Thee, where she  
never

From Love and Faith may sever.—  
Whereat the Eden crown she saw not  
whitening

A time ago, though whitening all the  
while,  
Reddened with life, to hear the Voice  
which talked  
To Adam as He walked.

## HUMAN LIFE'S MYSTERY

## I

We sow the glebe, we reap the corn,  
We build the house where we may  
rest,  
And then, at moments, suddenly,  
We look up to the great wide sky,  
Inquiring wherefore we were born . . .  
For earnest, or for jest ?

## II

The senses folding thick and dark  
About the stifled soul within,

We guess diviner things beyond,  
And yearn to them with yearning fond ;  
We strike out blindly to a mark  
Believed in, but not seen.

## III

We vibrate to the pant and thrill  
Wherewith Eternity has curled  
In serpent-twine about God's seat  
While, freshening upward to His feet,  
In gradual growth His full-leaved will  
Expands from world to world.

## IV

And, in the tumult and excess  
Of act and passion under sun,  
We sometimes hear—oh, soft and far,  
As silver star did touch with star,  
The kiss of Peace and Righteousness  
Through all things that are done.

## V

God keeps His holy mysteries  
Just on the outside of man's dream.  
In diapason slow, we think  
To hear their pinions rise and sink,  
While they float pure beneath His eyes,  
Like swans adown a stream.

## VI

Abstractions, are they, from the forms  
Of His great beauty?—exaltations  
From His great glory?—strong previsions  
Of what we shall be?—intuitions  
Of what we are—in calms and storms,  
Beyond our peace and passions !

## VII

Things nameless ! which, in passing so,  
Do stroke us with a subtle grace.  
We say, 'Who passes?'—they are dumb.  
We cannot see them go or come :  
Their touches fall soft—cold—as snow  
Upon a blind man's face.

## VIII

Yet, touching so, they draw above  
Our common thoughts to Heaven's  
unknown ;  
Our daily joy and pain, advance  
To a divine significance,—  
Our human love—O mortal love,  
That light is not its own !

## IX

And, sometimes, horror chills our blood  
 To be so near such mystic Things,  
 And we wrap round us, for defence,  
 Our purple manners, moods of sense—  
 As angels, from the face of God,  
 Stand hidden in their wings.

## X

And, sometimes, through life's heavy  
 swound  
 We grope for them!—with strangled  
 breath  
 We stretch our hands abroad and try  
 To reach them in our agony,—  
 And widen, so, the broad life-wound  
 Which soon is large enough for death.

## A CHILD'S THOUGHT OF GOD

## I

THEY say that God lives very high :  
 But if you look above the pines  
 You cannot see our God ; and why ?

## II

And if you dig down in the mines  
 You never see Him in the gold ;  
 Though, from Him, all that's glory shines.

## III

God is so good, He wears a fold  
 Of heaven and earth across His face—  
 Like secrets kept, for love, untold.

## IV

But still I feel that His embrace  
 Slides down by thrills, through all  
 things made,  
 Through sight and sound of every place.

## V

As if my tender mother laid  
 On my shut lids her kisses' pressure,  
 Half-waking me at night, and said  
 'Who kissed you through the dark,  
 dear guesser?'

## THE CLAIM

## I

GRIEF sate upon a rock and sighed one  
 day,  
 (Sighing is all her rest !)  
 'Wellaway, wellaway, ah, wellaway !'  
 As ocean beat the stone, did she her  
 breast,  
 'Ah, wellaway ! . . ah me ! alas, ah me !'  
 Such sighing uttered she.

## II

A Cloud spake out of heaven, as soft as  
 rain  
 That falls on water,—'Lo,  
 The Winds have wandered from me !  
 I remain  
 Alone in the sky-waste, and cannot go  
 To lean my whiteness on the mountain  
 blue  
 Till wanted for more dew.

## III

'The Sun has struck my brain to weary  
 peace,  
 Whereby constrained and pale  
 I spin for him a larger golden fleece  
 Than Jason's, yearning for as full a sail.  
 Sweet Grief, when thou hast sighed to  
 thy mind,  
 Give me a sigh for wind,

## IV

'And let it carry me adown the west.'  
 But Love, who, prostrated,  
 Lay at Grief's foot, his lifted eyes  
 possessed  
 Of her full image, answered in her stead :  
 'Now nay, now nay ! she shall not give  
 away  
 What is my wealth, for any Cloud that  
 flieth.  
 Where Grief makes moan,  
 Love claims his own !  
 And therefore do I lie here night and day,  
 And eke my life out with the breath she  
 sigheth.'

## SONG OF THE ROSE

ATTRIBUTED TO SAPPHO

*(From Achilles Tatius)*

If Zeus chose us a King of the flowers  
 in his mirth,  
 He would call to the rose and would  
 royally crown it,  
 For the rose, ho, the rose! is the grace  
 of the earth,  
 Is the light of the plants that are  
 growing upon it.  
 For the rose, ho, the rose! is the eye of  
 the flowers,  
 Is the blush of the meadows that feel  
 themselves fair,—  
 Is the lightning of beauty, that strikes  
 through the bowers  
 On pale lovers who sit in the glow  
 unaware.  
 Ho, the rose breathes of love! ho, the  
 rose lifts the cup  
 To the red lips of Cypris invoked for  
 a guest!  
 Ho, the rose, having curled its sweet  
 eaves for the world,  
 Takes delight in the motion its petals  
 keep up,  
 As they laugh to the Wind as it laughs  
 from the west.

## A DEAD ROSE

## I

O ROSE, who dares to name thee!  
 No longer roseate now, nor soft, nor  
 sweet,  
 But pale, and hard, and dry, as stubble-  
 wheat,—  
 Kept seven years in a drawer—thy  
 titles shame thee.

## II

The breeze that used to blow thee  
 Between the hedgerow thorns, and take  
 away  
 An odour up the lane to last all day,—  
 If breathing now, — unsweetened  
 would forgo thee.

## III

The sun that used to smite thee,  
 And mix his glory in thy gorgeous urn  
 Till beam appeared to bloom, and flower  
 to burn,—  
 If shining now,—with not a hue  
 would light thee.

## IV

The dew that used to wet thee,  
 And, white first, grow incarnadined,  
 because  
 It lay upon thee where the crimson  
 was,—  
 If dropping now,—would darken,  
 where it met thee.

## V

The fly that 'lit upon thee,  
 To stretch the tendrils of its tiny feet  
 Along thy leaf's pure edges after heat,—  
 If 'lighting now,—would coldly over-  
 run thee.

## VI

The bee that once did suck thee,  
 And build thy perfumed ambers up his  
 hive,  
 And swoon in thee for joy, till scarce  
 alive,—  
 If passing now,—would blindly over-  
 look thee.

## VII

The heart doth recognize thee,  
 Alone, alone! the heart doth smell thee  
 sweet,  
 Doth view thee fair, doth judge thee  
 most complete,  
 Perceiving all those changes that dis-  
 guise thee.

## VIII

Yes, and the heart doth owe thee  
 More love, dead rose, than to any roses  
 bold  
 Which Julia wears at dances, smiling  
 cold!—  
 Lie still upon this heart—which  
 breaks below thee!

## THE EXILE'S RETURN

## I

WHEN from thee, weeping I removed,  
And from my land for years,  
I thought not to return, Beloved,  
With those same parting tears.  
I come again to hill and lea,  
Weeping for thee.

## II

I clasped thine hand, when standing last  
Upon the shore in sight.  
The land is green, the ship is fast,  
I shall be there to-night  
I shall be there—no longer *we*—  
No more with thee!

## III

Had I beheld thee dead and still,  
I might more clearly know,  
How heart of thine could turn as chill  
As hearts by nature so;  
How change could touch the falsehood-free  
And changless *thee*.

## IV

But now thy fervid looks last-seen  
Within my soul remain;  
'Tis hard to think that *they* have been,  
To be no more again!  
That I shall vainly wait—ah me!  
A word from thee.

## V

I could not bear to look upon  
That mound of funeral clay,  
Where one sweet voice is silence,—one  
Ethereal brow decay;  
Where all thy mortal I may see,  
But never thee.

## VI

For thou art where all friends are gone  
Whose parting pain is o'er;  
And I, who love and weep alone,  
Where thou wilt weep no more,  
Weep bitterly and selfishly,  
For *me*, not *thee*.

## VII

I know, Beloved, thou canst not know  
That I endure this pain;  
Forsaints in heaven, the Scriptures show,  
Can never grieve again—  
And grief known mine, even there,  
would be  
Still shared by thee.

## THE SLEEP

He giveth His beloved sleep.—*Ps. cxxvii. 2.*

## I

OF all the thoughts of God that are  
Borne inward unto souls afar,  
Along the Psalmist's music deep,  
Now tell me if that any is,  
For gift or grace, surpassing this—  
'He giveth His beloved, sleep?'

## II

What would we give to our beloved?  
The hero's heart, to be unmoved,  
The poet's star-tuned harp, to sweep,  
The patriot's voice, to teach and rouse,  
The monarch's crown, to light the  
brows?—  
He giveth His beloved, sleep.

## III

What do we give to our beloved?  
A little faith all undisproved,  
A little dust to overweep,  
And bitter memories to make  
The whole earth blasted for our sake.  
He giveth His beloved, sleep.

## IV

'Sleep soft, beloved!' we sometimes say,  
But have no tune to charm away  
Sad dreams that through the eyelids  
creep.  
But never doleful dream again  
Shall break the happy slumber when  
He giveth His beloved, sleep.

## V

O earth, so full of dreary noises!  
O men, with wailing in your voices!  
O delfed gold, the wailers heap!  
O strife, O curse, that o'er it fall!  
God strikes a silence through you all,  
And giveth His beloved, sleep.

## VI

His dews drop mutely on the hill ;  
His cloud above it saileth still,  
Though on its slope men sow and reap.  
More softly than the dew is shed,  
Or cloud is floated overhead,  
He giveth His beloved, sleep.

## VII

Aye, men may wonder while they scan  
A living, thinking, feeling man  
Confirmed in such a rest to keep ;  
But angels say, and through the word  
I think their happy smile is *heard*—  
'He giveth His beloved, sleep.'

## VIII

For me, my heart that erst did go  
Most like a tired child at a show,  
That sees through tears the mummers  
leap,  
Would now its wearied vision close,  
Would childlike on His love repose,  
Who giveth His beloved, sleep.

## IX

And, friends, dear friends,—when it  
shall be  
That this low breath is gone from me,  
And round my bier ye come to weep,  
Let One, most loving of you all,  
Say, 'Not a tear must o'er her fall ;  
He giveth His beloved, sleep.'

## THE MEASURE

He comprehended the dust of the earth in a measure (שֶׁמֶט).—*Isaiah* xl. 12.

Thou givest them tears to drink in a measure (שֶׁמֶט)!—*Psalms* lxxx. 5.

## I

God, the Creator, with a pulseless hand  
Of unoriginated power, hath weighed  
The dust of earth and tears of man in one  
Measure, and by one weight.  
So saith His holy book.

## II

Shall we, then, who have issued from  
the dust,  
And there return,—shall we, who toil  
for dust,

<sup>1</sup> I believe that the word occurs in no other part of the Hebrew Scriptures.

And wrap our winnings in this dusty life,  
Say, 'No more tears, Lord God !  
The measure runneth o'er' !

## III

Oh, Holder of the balance, laughest Thou !  
Nay, Lord ! be gentler to our foolishness,  
For His sake who assumed our dust and  
turns  
On Thee pathetic eyes  
Still moistened with our tears.

## IV

And teach us, O our Father, while we  
weep,  
To look in patience upon earth and  
learn—  
Waiting, in that meek gesture, till at last  
These tearful eyes be filled  
With the dry dust of death.

## COWPER'S GRAVE

## I

It is a place where poets crowned may  
feel the heart's decaying ;  
It is a place where happy saints may  
weep amid their praying.  
Yet let the grief and humbleness, as low  
as silence, languish :  
Earth surely now may give her calm to  
whom she gave her anguish.

## II

O poets, from a maniac's tongue was  
poured the deathless singing !  
O Christians, at your cross of hope, a  
hopeless hand was clinging !  
O men, this man in brotherhood your  
weary paths beguiling,  
Groaned inly while he taught you peace,  
and died while ye were smiling !

## III

And now, what time ye all may read  
through dimming tears his story,  
How discord on the music fell, and dark-  
ness on the glory,  
And how when, one by one, sweet sounds  
and wandering lights departed,  
He wore no less a loving face because so  
broken-hearted.

## IV

He shall be strong to sanctify the poet's  
high vocation,  
And bow the meekest Christian down in  
meeker adoration;  
Nor ever shall he be, in praise, by wise  
or good forsaken,  
Named softly as the household name of  
one whom God hath taken.

## V

With quiet sadness and no gloom I learn  
to think upon him,—  
With meekness that is gratefulness to  
God whose heaven hath won him,  
Who suffered once the madness-cloud to  
His own love to blind him,  
But gently led the blind along where  
breath and bird could find him;

## VI

And wrought within his shattered brain  
such quick poetic senses  
As hills have language for, and stars,  
harmonious influences.  
The pulse of dew upon the grass, kept  
his within its number,  
And silent shadows from the trees re-  
freshed him like a slumber.

## VII

Wild timid hares were drawn from woods  
to share his home-caresses,  
Uplooking to his human eyes with sylvan  
tendernesses.  
The very world, by God's constraint,  
from falsehood's ways removing,  
Its women and its men became, beside  
him, true and loving.

## VIII

And though, in blindness, he remained  
unconscious of that guiding,  
And things provided came without the  
sweet sense of providing,  
He testified this solemn truth, while  
frenzy desolated,  
—Nor man nor nature satisfy whom only  
God created.

## IX

Like a sick child that knoweth not his  
mother while she blesses  
And drops upon his burning brow the  
coolness of her kisses,—

That turns his fevered eyes around—'My  
mother! where's my mother?'—  
As if such tender words and deeds could  
come from any other!—

## X

The fever gone, with leaps of heart he  
sees her bending o'er him,  
Her face all pale from watchful love, the  
unweary love she bore him!—  
Thus, woke the poet from the dream his  
life's long fever gave him,  
Beneath those deep pathetic Eyes, which  
closed in death to save him.

## XI

Thus! oh, not *thus!* no type of earth can  
image that awaking,  
Wherein he scarcely heard the chant of  
seraphs, round him breaking,  
Or felt the new immortal throb of soul  
from body parted,  
But felt those eyes alone, and knew,—  
'My Saviour! not deserted!'

## XII

Deserted! Who hath dreamt that when  
the cross in darkness rested,  
Upon the Victim's hidden face, no love  
was manifested?  
What frantic hands outstretched have  
e'er the atoning drops averted?  
What tears have washed them from the  
soul, that *one* should be deserted!

## XIII

Deserted! God could separate from His  
own essence rather;  
And Adam's sins *have* swept between the  
righteous Son and Father.  
Yea, once, Immanuel's orphaned cry His  
universe hath shaken—  
It went up single, echoless, 'My God, I  
am forsaken!'

## XIV

It went up from the Holy's lips amid His  
lost creation,  
That, of the lost, no son should use those  
words of desolation!  
That earth's worst frenzies, marring  
hope, should mar not hope's  
fruitful,  
And I, on Cowper's grave, should see  
his rapture in a vision.

## THE WEAKEST THING

## I

WHICH is the weakest thing of all  
 Mine heart can ponder?  
 The sun, a little cloud can pall  
 With darkness yonder?  
 The cloud, a little wind can move  
 Where'er it listeth?  
 The wind, a little leaf above,  
 Though sere, resisteth?

## II

What time that yellow leaf was green,  
 My days were gladder;  
 But now, whatever Spring may mean,  
 I must grow sadder.  
 Ah me! a leaf with sighs can wring  
 My lips asunder?  
 Then is mine heart the weakest thing  
 Itself can ponder.

## III

Yet, Heart, when sun and cloud are pined  
 And drop together,  
 And at a blast which is not wind  
 The forests wither,  
 Thou, from the darkening deathly curse,  
 To glory breakest,—  
 The Strongest of the universe  
 Guarding the weakest!

## THE PET-NAME

— the name  
 Which from THEIR lips seemed a caress.  
 MISS MITFORD'S *Dramatic Scenes*.

## I

I HAVE a name, a little name,  
 Uncadenced for the ear,  
 Unhonoured by ancestral claim,  
 Unsanctified by prayer and psalm  
 The solemn font anear.

## II

It never did, to pages wove  
 For gay romance, belong;  
 It never dedicate did move  
 As 'Sacharissa,' unto love—  
 'Orinda,' unto song.

## III

Though I write books it will be read  
 Upon the leaves of none,  
 And afterward, when I am dead,  
 Will ne'er be graved for sight or tread,  
 Across my funeral-stone.

## IV

This name, whoever chance to call,  
 Perhaps your smile may win.  
 Nay, do not smile! mine eyelids fall  
 Over mine eyes, and feel withal  
 The sudden tears within.

## V

Is there a leaf that greenly grows  
 Where summer meadows bloom,  
 But gathereth the winter snows,  
 And changeth to the hue of those,  
 If lasting till they come?

## VI

Is there a word, or jest, or game,  
 But time encrusteth round  
 With sad associate thoughts the same?  
 And so to me my very name  
 Assumes a mournful sound.

## VII

My brother gave that name to me  
 When we were children twain,—  
 When names acquired baptismally  
 Were hard to utter, as to see  
 That life had any pain.

## VIII

No shade was on us then, save one  
 Of chestnuts from the hill—  
 And through the word our laugh did run  
 As part thereof. The mirth being done,  
 He calls me by it still.

## IX

Nay, do not smile! I hear in it  
 What none of you can hear,—  
 The talk upon the willow seat,  
 The bird and wind that did repeat  
 Around, our human cheer.

## X

I hear the birthday's noisy bliss,  
 My sisters' woodland glee,—  
 My father's praise, I did not miss,  
 When stooping down he cared to kiss  
 The poet at his knee,—

## XI

And voices, which, to name me, ay  
 Their tenderest tones were keeping—  
 To some I never more can say  
 An answer, till God wipes away  
 In heaven these drops of weeping.

## XII

My name to me a sadness wears,  
 No murmurs cross my mind.  
 Now God be thanked for these thick tears,  
 Which show, of those departed years,  
 Sweet memories left behind.

## XIII

Now God be thanked for years enwrought  
 With love which softens yet.  
 Now God be thanked for every thought  
 Which is so tender it has caught  
 Earth's guerdon of regret.

## XIV

Earth saddens, never shall remove  
 Affections purely given;  
 And e'en that mortal grief shall prove  
 The immortality of love,  
 And heighten it with Heaven.

## THE MOURNING MOTHER

## OF THE DEAD BLIND

Dost thou weep, mourning mother,  
 For thy blind boy in grave?  
 That no more with each other  
 Sweet counsel ye can have?—  
 That he, left dark by nature,  
 Can never more be led  
 By thee, maternal creature,  
 Along smooth paths instead?  
 That thou canst no more show him  
 The sunshine, by the heat;  
 The river's silver flowing,  
 By murmurs at his feet?  
 The foliage, by its coolness;  
 The roses, by their smell;  
 And all creation's fullness,  
 By Love's invisible?

Weepest thou to behold not  
 His meek blind eyes again,—  
 Closed doorways which were folded,  
 And prayed against in vain—  
 And under which sate smiling  
 The child-mouth evermore,  
 As one who watcheth, wiling  
 The time by, at a door?  
 And weepest thou to feel not  
 His clinging hand on thine—  
 Which now, at dream-time, will not  
 Its cold touch disentwine?  
 And weepest thou still oft,  
 Oh, never more to mark  
 His low soft words, made softer  
 By speaking in the dark?  
 Weep on, thou mourning mother!

## II

But since to him when living  
 Thou wast both sun and moon,  
 Look o'er his grave, surviving,  
 From a high sphere alone.  
 Sustain that exaltation,  
 Expand that tender light,  
 And hold in mother-passion  
 Thy Blessed in thy sight.  
 See how he went out straightway  
 From the dark world he knew,—  
 No twilight in the gateway  
 To mediate 'twixt the two,—  
 Into the sudden glory,  
 Out of the dark he trod,  
 Departing from before thee  
 At once to light and God!—  
 For the first face, beholding  
 The Christ's in its divine,  
 For the first place, the golden  
 And tideless hyaline;  
 With trees, at lasting summer,  
 That rock to songful sound,  
 While angels, the new-comer,  
 Wrap a still smile around.  
 Oh, in the blessed psalm now,  
 His happy voice he tries,  
 Spreading a thicker palm-bough,  
 Than others, o'er his eyes!  
 Yet still, in all the singing,  
 Thinks haply of thy song  
 Which, in his life's first springing,  
 Sang to him all night long;

And wishes it beside him,  
 With kissing lips that cool  
 And soft did overglide him,  
 To make the sweetness full.  
 Look up, O mourning mother,  
 Thy blind boy walks in light!  
 Ye wait for one another,  
 Before God's infinite.  
 But thou art now the darkest,  
 Thou mother left below—  
 Thou, the sole blind,—thou markest,  
 Content that it be so,—  
 Until ye two have meeting  
 Where Heaven's pearl-gate is,  
 And *he* shall lead thy feet in,  
 As once thou leddest *his*.  
 Wait on, thou mourning mother.

## A VALEDICTION

## I

God be with thee, my beloved—God be  
 with thee!  
 Else alone thou goest forth,  
 Thy face unto the north,  
 Moor and pleassance all around thee and  
 beneath thee,  
 Looking equal in one snow;  
 While I who try to reach thee,  
 Vainly follow, vainly follow,  
 With the farewell and the hollo,  
 And cannot reach thee so.  
 Alas, I can but teach thee!  
 God be with thee, my beloved—God be  
 with thee.

## II

Can I teach thee, my beloved—can I  
 teach thee?  
 If I said, 'Go left or right,'  
 The counsel would be light,  
 The wisdom, poor of all that could enrich  
 thee.  
 My right would show like left;  
 My raising would depress thee,  
 My choice of light would blind thee,  
 Of way, would leave behind thee,  
 Of end, would leave bereft.  
 Alas, I can but bless thee!  
 May God teach thee, my beloved—may  
 God teach thee.

## III

Can I bless thee, my beloved—can I  
 bless thee?  
 What blessing word can I,  
 From mine own tears, keep dry?  
 What flowers grow in my field where-  
 with to dress thee?  
 My good reverts to ill;  
 My calmnesses would move thee,  
 My softnesses would prick thee,  
 My bindings up would break thee,  
 My crownings, curse and kill.  
 Alas, I can but love thee!  
 May God bless thee, my beloved—may  
 God bless thee.

## IV

Can I love thee, my beloved—can I love  
 thee?  
 And is *this* like love, to stand  
 With no help in my hand,  
 When strong as death I fain would watch  
 above thee?  
 My love-kiss can deny  
 No tear that falls beneath it;  
 Mine oath of love can swear thee  
 From no ill that comes near thee,—  
 And thou diest while I breathe it,  
 And I—I can but die!  
 May God love thee, my beloved—may  
 God love thee.

## LESSONS FROM THE GORSE

To win the secret of a weed's plain heart.  
 LOWELL

## I

MOUNTAIN gorses, ever-golden,  
 Cankered not the whole year long!  
 Do ye teach us to be strong,  
 Howsoever pricked and holden  
 Like your thorny blooms, and so  
 Trodden on by rain and snow,  
 Up the hillside of this life, as bleak as  
 where ye grow!

## II

Mountain blossoms, shining blos-  
 soms,  
 Do ye teach us to be glad  
 When no summer can be had  
 Blooming in our inward bosoms?

Ye, whom God preserveth still,—  
Set as lights upon a hill,  
Tokens to the wintry earth that Beauty  
liveth still!

## III

Mountain gorses, do ye teach us  
From that academic chair,  
Canopied with azure air,  
That the wisest word man reaches  
Is the humblest he can speak?  
Ye, who live on mountain peak,  
Yet live low along the ground, beside  
the grasses meek!

## IV

Mountain gorses, since Linnaeus  
Knelt beside you on the sod,  
For your beauty thanking God,—  
For your teaching, ye should see us  
Bowing in prostration new!  
Whence arisen,—if one or two  
Drops be on our cheeks—O world, they  
are not tears but dew.

## THE LADY'S YES

## I

'Yes,' I answered you last night;  
'No,' this morning, sir, I say.  
Colours seen by candle-light  
Will not look the same by day.

## II

When the viols played their best,  
Lamps above, and laughs below,  
*Love me* sounded like a jest,  
Fit for *yes* or fit for *no*.

## III

Call me false or call me free—  
Vow, whatever light may shine,  
No man on your face shall see  
Any grief, for change on mine.

## IV

Yet the sin is on us both;  
Time to dance is not to woo;  
 wooing light makes fickle troth,  
Scorn of *me* recoils on *you*.

## V

Learn to win a lady's faith  
Nobly, as the thing is high,  
Bravely, as for life and death—  
With a loyal gravity.

## VI

Lead her from the festive boards,  
Point her to the starry skies,  
Guard her, by your truthful words,  
Pure from courtship's flatteries.

## VII

By your truth she shall be true,  
Ever true, as wives of yore;  
And her *yes*, once said to you,  
SHALL be *Yes* for evermore.

## A WOMAN'S SHORTCOMINGS

## I

SHE has laughed as softly as if she sighed,  
She has counted six, and over,  
Of a purse well filled, and a heart well  
tried—

Oh, each a worthy lover!  
They 'give her time'; for her soul must  
slip

Where the world has set the grooving.  
She will lie to none with her fair red  
lip—

But love seeks truer loving.

## II

She trembles her fan in a sweetness dumb,  
As her thoughts were beyond recalling,  
With a glance for *one*, and a glance for  
*some*,

From her eyelids rising and falling;  
Speaks common words with a blushful air,  
Hears bold words, unrepenting;  
But her silence says—what she never  
will swear—

And love seeks better loving.

## III

Go, lady, lean to the night-guitar,  
And drop a smile to the bringer,  
Then smile as sweetly, when he is far,  
At the voice of an indoor singer.  
Bask tenderly beneath tender eyes;  
Glance lightly, on their removing;  
And join new vows to old perjuries—  
But dare not call it loving.

## IV

Unless you can think, when the song is done,

No other is soft in the rhythm;  
Unless you can feel, when left by One,  
That all men else go with him;  
Unless you can know, when upraised by his breath,

That your beauty itself wants proving;  
Unless you can swear, 'For life, for death!'—

Oh, fear to call it loving!

## V

Unless you can muse in a crowd all day  
On the absent face that fixed you;

Unless you can love, as the angels may,  
With the breadth of heaven betwixt you;

Unless you can dream that his faith is fast,  
Through behoving and unbehoving;  
Unless you can *die* when the dream is past—

Oh, never call it loving!

## A MAN'S REQUIREMENTS

## I

Love me, sweet, with all thou art,  
Feeling, thinking, seeing,—  
Love me in the lightest part,  
Love me in full being.

## II

Love me with thine open youth  
In its frank surrender;  
With the vowing of thy mouth,  
With its silence tender.

## III

Love me with thine azure eyes,  
Made for earnest granting!  
Taking colour from the skies,  
Can Heaven's truth be wanting?

## IV

Love me with their lids, that fall  
Snow-like at first meeting;  
Love me with thine heart, that all  
The neighbours then see beating.

## V

Love me with thine hand stretched out  
Freely—open-minded;

Love me with thy loitering foot,—  
Hearing one behind it.

## VI

Love me with thy voice, that turns  
Sudden faint above me;

Love me with thy blush that burns  
When I murmur, *Love me!*

## VII

Love me with thy thinking soul—  
Break it to love-sighing;  
Love me with thy thoughts that roll  
On through living—dying.

## VIII

Love me in thy gorgeous airs,  
When the world has crowned thee!  
Love me, kneeling at thy prayers,  
With the angels round thee.

## IX

Love me pure, as musers do,  
Up the woodlands shady;  
Love me gaily, fast, and true,  
As a winsome lady.

## X

Through all hopes that keep us brave,  
Further off or nigher,  
Love me for the house and grave,—  
And for something higher.

## XI

Thus, if thou wilt prove me, dear,  
Woman's love no fable,  
I will love *thee*—half-a-year—  
As a man is able.

## A YEAR'S SPINNING

## I

HE listened at the porch that day,  
To hear the wheel go on, and on;  
And then it stopped—ran back away—  
While through the door he brought  
the sun.  
But now my spinning is all done.

## II

He sate beside me, with an oath  
That love ne'er ended, once begun.  
I smiled—believing for us both,  
What was the truth for only one.  
And now my spinning is all done.

## III

My mother cursed me that I heard  
A young man's wooing as I spun.  
Thanks, cruel mother, for that word,—  
For I have, since, a harder known!  
And now my spinning is all done.

## IV

I thought—O God!—my first-born's cry  
Both voices to mine ear would drown.  
I listened in mine agony—  
It was the *silence* made me groan!  
And now my spinning is all done.

## V

Bury me 'twixt my mother's grave  
(Who cursed me on her death-bed lone)  
And my dead baby's (God it save!),  
Who, not to bless me, would not moan.  
And now my spinning is all done.

## VI

A stone upon my heart and head,  
But no name written on the stone!  
Sweet neighbours, whisper low instead,  
'This sinner was a loving one—'  
And now her spinning is all done.'

## VII

And let the door ajar remain,  
In case he should pass by anon;  
And leave the wheel out very plain,—  
That *HE*, when passing in the sun,  
May see the spinning is all done.

## CHANGE UPON CHANGE

## I

Five months ago the stream did flow,  
The lilies bloomed within the sedge,  
And we were lingering to and fro,  
Where none will track thee in this snow,  
Along the stream, beside the hedge.  
Ah, sweet, be free to love and go!

For if I do not hear thy foot,  
The frozen river is as mute,  
The flowers have dried down to the  
root.  
And why, since these be changed  
since May,  
Shouldst *thou* change less than *they*?

## II

And slow, slow, as the winter snow,  
The tears have drifted to mine eyes;  
And my poor cheeks, five months ago,  
Set blushing at thy praises so,  
Put paleness on for a disguise.  
Ah, sweet, be free to praise and go!  
For if my face is turned too pale,  
It was thine oath that first did fail,—  
It was thy love proved false and frail!  
And why, since these be changed enow,  
Should *I* change less than *thou*?

## THAT DAY

## I

I *STAND* by the river where both of us  
stood,  
And there is but one shadow to darken  
the flood;  
And the path leading to it, where both  
used to pass,  
Has the step but of one, to take dew  
from the grass,—  
One forlorn since that day.

## II

The flowers of the margin are many to  
see;  
None stoops at my bidding to pluck  
them for me.  
The bird in the alder sings loudly and  
long,—  
My low sound of weeping disturbs not  
his song,  
As thy vow did that day.

## III

I stand by the river—I think of the vow—  
Oh, calm as the place is, vow-breaker,  
be thou!  
I leave the flower growing, the bird,  
unreproved;—  
Would I trouble *thee* rather than *them*,  
my beloved,  
And my lover that day!

IV

Go, be sure of my love—by that treason  
 forgiven ;  
 Of my prayers—by the blessings they  
 win thee from Heaven ;  
 Of my grief—(guess the length of the  
 sword by the sheath's)  
 By the silence of life, more pathetic  
 than death's !  
 Go,—be clear of that day !

A REED

I

I AM no trumpet, but a reed :  
 No flattering breath shall from me lead  
 A silver sound, a hollow sound :  
 I will not ring, for priest or king,  
 One blast that in re-echoing  
 Would leave a bondsman faster bound.

II

I am no trumpet, but a reed,—  
 A broken reed, the wind indeed  
 Left flat upon a dismal shore ;  
 Yet if a little maid, or child,  
 Should sigh within it, earnest-mild,  
 This reed will answer evermore.

III

I am no trumpet, but a reed.  
 Go, tell the fishers, as they spread  
 Their nets along the river's edge,  
 I will not tear their nets at all,  
 Nor pierce their hands, if they should fall ;  
 Then let them leave me in the sedge.

THE DEAD PAN

Excited by Schiller's *Götter Griechenlands*, and partly founded on a well-known tradition mentioned in a treatise of Plutarch (*De Oraculorum Defectu*), according to which, at the hour of the Saviour's agony, a cry of 'Great Pan is dead!' swept across the waves in the hearing of certain mariners,—and the oracles ceased.

It is in all veneration to the memory of the deathless Schiller that I oppose a doctrine still more dishonouring to poetry than to Christianity.

As Mr. Kenyon's graceful and harmonious

paraphrase of the German poem was the first occasion of the turning of my thoughts in this direction, I take advantage of the pretence to indulge my feelings (which overflow on other grounds) by inscribing my lyric to that dear friend and relative, with the earnestness of appreciating esteem as well as of affectionate gratitude. [1844.]

I

Gods of Hellas, gods of Hellas,  
 Can ye listen in your silence ?  
 Can your mystic voices tell us  
 Where ye hide ! In floating islands,  
 With a wind that evermore  
 Keeps you out of sight of shore ?  
 Pan, Pan is dead.

II

In what revels are ye sunken,  
 In old Aethiopia ?  
 Have the Pygmies made you drunken,  
 Bathing in mandragora  
 Your divine pale lips, that shiver  
 Like the lotus in the river ?  
 Pan, Pan is dead.

III

Do ye sit there still in slumber,  
 In gigantic Alpine rows ?  
 The black poppies out of number  
 Nodding, dripping from your brows  
 To the red lees of your wine,  
 And so kept alive and fine ?  
 Pan, Pan is dead.

IV

Or lie crushed your stagnant corpses  
 Where the silver spheres roll on,  
 Stung to life by centric forces  
 Thrown like rays out from the sun !—  
 While the smoke of your old altars  
 Is the shroud that round you welters ?  
 Great Pan is dead.

V

' Gods of Hellas, gods of Hellas,'  
 Said the old Hellenic tongue !  
 Said the hero-oaths, as well as  
 Poets' songs the sweetest sung !  
 Have ye grown deaf in a day ?  
 Can ye speak not yea or nay—  
 Since Pan is dead ?

## VI

Do ye leave your rivers flowing  
All alone, O Naiades,  
While your drenched locks dry slow in  
This cold feeble sun and breeze!—  
Not a word the Naiads say,  
Though the rivers run for ay.

For Pan is dead.

## VII

From the gloaming of the oak-wood,  
O ye Dryads, could ye flee?  
At the rushing thunderstroke, would  
No sob tremble through the tree!—  
Not a word the Dryads say,  
Though the forests wave for ay.

For Pan is dead.

## VIII

Have ye left the mountain places,  
Oreads wild, for other tryst?  
Shall we see no sudden faces  
Strike a glory through the mist?  
Not a sound the silence thrills  
Of the everlasting hills.

Pan, Pan is dead.

## IX

O twelve gods of Plato's vision,  
Crowned to starry wanderings.—  
With your chariots in procession,  
And your silver clash of wings!  
Very pale ye seem to rise,  
Ghosts of Grecian deities,—

Now Pan is dead!

## X

Jove, that right hand is unloaded,  
Whence the thunder did prevail,  
While in idiocy of godhead  
Thou art staring the stars pale!  
And thine eagle, blind and old,  
Roughs his feathers in the cold.

Pan, Pan is dead.

## XI

Where, O Juno, is the glory  
Of thy regal look and tread?  
Will they lay, for evermore, thee,  
On thy dim, straight, golden bed?  
Will thy queendom all lie hid  
Meekly under either lid?

Pan, Pan is dead.

## XII

Ha, Apollo! floats his golden  
Hair all mist-like where he stands,  
While the Muses hang enfolding  
Knee and foot with faint wild hands?  
'Neath the clanging of thy bow,  
Niobe looked lost as thou!

Pan, Pan is dead.

## XIII

Shall the casque with its brown iron,  
Pallas' broad blue eyes, eclipse,  
And no hero take inspiring  
From the god-Greek of her lips?  
'Neath her olive dost thou sit,  
Mars the mighty, cursing it?

Pan, Pan is dead.

## XIV

Bacchus, Bacchus! on the panther  
He swoons,—bound with his own vines;  
And his Maenads slowly saunter,  
Head aside, among the pines,  
While they murmur dreamingly,  
'Evohe—ah—evohe—!'

Ah, Pan is dead!

## XV

Neptune lies beside the trident,  
Dull and senseless as a stone;  
And old Pluto deaf and silent  
Is cast out into the sun:  
Ceres smileth stern thereat,  
'We *all* now are desolate—'

Now Pan is dead.

## XVI

Aphrodite! dead and driven  
As thy native foam, thou art;  
With the cestus long done heaving  
On the white calm of thine heart!  
*Ai Adonis!* at that shriek,  
Not a tear runs down her cheek—

Pan, Pan is dead.

## XVII

And the Loves, we used to know from  
One another, huddled lie,  
Frore as taken in a snow-storm,  
Close beside her tenderly,—  
As if each had weakly tried  
Once to kiss her as he died.

Pan, Pan is dead.

## XVIII

What, and Hermes? Time enthralleth  
 All thy cunning, Hermes, thus,—  
 And the ivy blindly crawleth  
 Round thy brave caduceus?  
 Hast thou no new message for us,  
 Full of thunder and Jove-glories?  
 Nay, Pan is dead.

## XIX

Crownèd Cybele's great turret  
 Rocks and crumbles on her head;  
 Roar the lions of her chariot  
 Toward the wilderness, unfed.  
 Scornful children are not mute,—  
 'Mother, mother, walk afoot—  
 Since Pan is dead.'

## XX

In the fiery-hearted centre  
 Of the solemn universe,  
 Ancient Vesta,—who could enter  
 To consume thee with this curse?  
 Drop thy grey chin on thy knee,  
 O thou palsied Mystery!  
 For Pan is dead.

## XXI

Gods, we vainly do adjure you,—  
 Ye return nor voice nor sign!  
 Not a votary could secure you  
 Even a grave for your Divine!  
 Not a grave, to show thereby,  
*Here these grey old gods do lie.*  
 Pan, Pan is dead.

## XXII

Even that Greece who took your wages  
 Calls the obolus outworn;  
 And the hoarse deep-throated ages  
 Laugh your godships unto scorn;  
 And the poets do disclaim you,  
 Or grow colder if they name you—  
 And Pan is dead.

## XXIII

Gods bereavèd, gods belated,  
 With your purples rent asunder!  
 Gods disowned and desecrated,  
 Disinherited of thunder!  
 Now, the goats may climb and crop  
 The soft grass on Ida's top—  
 Now, Pan is dead.

## XXIV

Calm, of old, the bark went onward,  
 When a cry more loud than wind  
 Rose up, deepened, and swept sunward,  
 From the piled Dark behind;  
 And the sun shrank and grew pale,  
 Breathed against by the great wail—  
 'Pan, Pan is dead.'

## XXV

And the rowers from the benches  
 Fell,—each shuddering on his face—  
 While departing Influences  
 Struck a cold back through the place;  
 And the shadow of the ship  
 Reeled along the passive deep—  
 'Pan, Pan is dead.'

## XXVI

And that dismal cry rose slowly  
 And sank slowly through the air,  
 Full of spirit's melancholy  
 And eternity's despair!  
 And they heard the words it said—  
 'PAN IS DEAD—GREAT PAN IS DEAD—  
 PAN, PAN IS DEAD.'

## XXVII

'Twas the hour when One in Sion  
 Hung for love's sake on a cross;  
 When His brow was chill with dying,  
 And His soul was faint with loss;  
 When His priestly blood dropped down-  
 ward,  
 And His kingly eyes looked throne-  
 ward—

Then, Pan was dead.

## XXVIII

By the love He stood alone in  
 His sole Godhead rose complete,  
 And the false gods fell down moaning,  
 Each from off his golden seat;  
 All the false gods with a cry  
 Rendered up their deity—  
 Pan, Pan was dead.

## XXIX

Wailing wide across the islands,  
 They rent, vest-like, their Divine!  
 And a darkness and a silence  
 Quenched the light of every shrine;  
 And Dodona's oak swang lonely  
 Henceforth, to the tempest only,  
 Pan, Pan was dead.

## XXX

Pythia staggered,—feeling o'er her,  
Her lost god's forsaking look;  
Straight her eyeballs filmed with horror,  
And her crispy fillets shook,  
And her lips gasped through their foam  
For a word that did not come.

Pan, Pan was dead.

## XXXI

O ye vain false gods of Hellas,  
Ye are silent evermore!  
And I dash down this old chalice,  
Whence libations ran of yore.  
See, the wine crawls in the dust  
Wormlike—as your glories must.  
Since Pan is dead.

## XXXII

Get to dust, as common mortals,  
By a common doom and track!  
Let no Schiller from the portals  
Of that Hades call you back,  
Or instruct us to weep all  
At your antique funeral.  
Pan, Pan is dead.

## XXXIII

By your beauty, which confesses  
Some chief Beauty conquering you,—  
By our grand heroic guesses,  
Through your falsehood, at the True,—  
We will weep *not* . . . ! earth shall roll  
Heir to each god's aureole—  
And Pan is dead.

## XXXIV

Earth outgrows the mythic fancies  
Sung beside her in her youth;  
And those debonair romances  
Sound but dull beside the truth.  
Phoebus' chariot-course is run:  
Look up, poets, to the sun!  
Pan, Pan is dead.

## XXXV

Christ hath sent us down the angels;  
And the whole earth and the skies  
Are illumed by altar-candles  
Lit for blessed mysteries;  
And a Priest's hand, through creation,  
Waveth calm and consecration—  
And Pan is dead.

## XXXVI

Truth is fair: should we forgo it?  
Can we sigh right for a wrong?  
God Himself is the best Poet,  
And the Real is His song.  
Sing His truth out fair and full,  
And secure His beautiful.

Let Pan be dead.

## XXXVII

Truth is large. Our aspiration  
Scarce embraces half we be:  
Shame, to stand in His creation,  
And doubt truth's sufficiency!—  
To think God's song unexcelling  
The poor tales of our own telling—  
When Pan is dead.

## XXXVIII

What is true and just and honest,  
What is lovely, what is pure—  
All of praise that hath admonisht,  
All of virtue, shall endure,—  
These are themes for poets' uses,  
Stirring nobler than the Muses,  
Ere Pan was dead.

## XXXIX

O brave poets, keep back nothing,  
Nor mix falsehood with the whole:  
Look up Godward; speak the truth in  
Worthy song from earnest soul!  
Hold, in high poetic duty,  
Truest Truth the fairest Beauty.  
Pan, Pan is dead.

## A CHILD'S GRAVE AT FLORENCE

A. A. E. C. BORN JULY 1848. DIED  
NOVEMBER 1849

## I

OF English blood, of Tuscan birth, . .  
What country should we give her?  
Instead of any on the earth,  
The civic Heavens receive her.

## II

And here, among the English tombs,  
In Tuscan ground we lay her,  
While the blue Tuscan sky endomes  
Our English words of prayer.

## III

A little child!—how long she lived,  
By months, not years, is reckoned :  
Born in one July, she survived  
Alone to see a second.

## IV

Bright-featured, as the July sun  
Her little face still played in,  
And splendours, with her birth begun,  
Had had no time for fading.

## V

So, LILY, from those July hours,  
No wonder we should call her ;  
She looked such kinship to the flowers,  
Was but a little taller.

## VI

A Tuscan Lily,—only white,  
As Dante, in abhorrence  
Of red corruption, wished aright  
The lilies of his Florence.

## VII

We could not wish her whiter,—her  
Who perfumed with pure blossom  
The house!—a lovely thing to wear  
Upon a mother's bosom !

## VIII

This July creature thought perhaps  
Our speech not worth assuming ;  
She sate upon her parents' laps,  
And mimicked the gnat's humming ;

## IX

Said 'father,' 'mother'—then, left off,  
For tongues celestial, fitter ;  
Her hair had grown just long enough  
To catch heaven's jasper-glitter.

## X

Babes ! Love could always hear and see  
Behind the cloud that hid them.  
'Let little children come to Me,  
And do not thou forbid them.'

## XI

So, unforbidding, have we met,  
And gently here have laid her,  
Though winter is no time to get  
The flowers that should o'erspread  
her.

## XII

We should bring pansies quick with  
spring,  
Rose, violet, daffodilly,  
And also, above everything,  
White lilies for our Lily.

## XIII

Nay, more than flowers, this grave  
exacts,—  
Glad, grateful attestations  
Of her sweet eyes and pretty acts,  
With calm renunciations.

## XIV

Her very mother with light feet  
Should leave the place too earthy,  
Saying, 'The angels have thee, Sweet,  
Because we are not worthy.'

## XV

But winter kills the orange buds,  
The gardens in the frost are,  
And all the heart dissolves in floods,  
Remembering we have lost her !

## XVI

Poor earth, poor heart,—too weak, too  
weak,  
To miss the July shining !  
Poor heart!—what bitter words we speak  
When God speaks of resigning !

## XVII

Sustain this heart in us that faints,  
Thou God, the self-existent !  
We catch up wild at parting saints,  
And feel Thy Heaven too distant.

## XVIII

The wind that swept them out of sin  
Has ruffled all our vesture :  
On the shut door that let them in,  
We beat with frantic gesture,—

## XIX

To us, us also—open straight !  
The outer life is chilly—  
Are *we* too, like the earth, to wait  
Till next year for our Lily ?

## XX

—Oh, my own baby on my knees,  
My leaping, dimpled treasure,  
At every word I write like these,  
Clasped close, with stronger pressure !

## XXI

Too well my own heart understands,—  
At every word beats fuller—  
My little feet, my little hands,  
And hair of Lily's colour!

## XXII

—But God gives patience, Love learns  
strength,  
And Faith remembers promise,  
And Hope itself can smile at length  
On other hopes gone from us.

## XXIII

Love, strong as Death, shall conquer  
Death,  
Through struggle, made more glorious.  
This mother stills her sobbing breath,  
Renouncing, yet victorious.

## XXIV

Arms, empty of her child, she lifts,  
With spirit unbereaven,—  
'God will not all take back His gifts;  
My Lily's mine in heaven!

## XXV

• Still mine! maternal rights serene  
Not given to another!  
The crystal bars shine faint between  
The souls of child and mother.

## XXVI

• Meanwhile, 'the mother cries, 'content!  
Our love was well divided.  
Its sweetness following where she went,  
Its anguish stayed where I did.

## XXVII

• Well done of God, to halve the lot,  
And give her all the sweetness;  
To us, the empty room and cot,—  
To her, the Heaven's completeness.

## XXVIII

'To us, this grave—to her, the rows  
The mystic palm-trees spring in;  
To us, the silence in the house,—  
To her, the choral singing.

## XXIX

'For her, to gladden in God's view,—  
For us, to hope and bear on!—  
Grow, Lily, in thy garden new  
Beside the rose of Sharon.

## XXX

'Grow fast in heaven, sweet Lily clipped,  
In love more calm than this is,—  
And may the angels dewy-lipped  
Remind thee of our kisses!

## XXXI

'While none shall tell thee of our tears,  
These human tears now falling,  
Till, after a few patient years,  
One home shall take us all in.

## XXXII

'Child, father, mother—who, left out?  
Not mother, and not father!—  
And when, our dying couch about,  
The natural mists shall gather,

## XXXIII

'Some smiling angel close shall stand  
In old Correggio's fashion,  
And bear a LILY in his hand,  
For death's ANNUNCIATION.'

## CATARINA TO CAMOENS

DYING IN HIS ABSENCE ABROAD, AND  
REFERRING TO THE POEM IN WHICH  
HE RECORDED THE SWEETNESS OF  
HER EYES

## I

ON the door you will not enter,  
I have gazed too long—adieu!  
Hope withdraws her peradventure—  
Death is near me,—and not you.  
Come, O lover,  
Close and cover  
These poor eyes, you called, I ween,  
'Sweetest eyes, were ever seen.'

## II

When I heard you sing that burden  
In my vernal days and bowers,  
Other praises disregarding,  
I but hearkened that of yours—  
Only saying  
In heart-playing,  
'Blessed eyes mine eyes have been,  
If the sweetest, his have seen!'

## III

But all changes. At this vesper,  
Cold the sun shines down the door.  
If you stood there, would you whisper  
‘Love, I love you,’ as before,—  
Death pervading  
Now, and shading  
Eyes you sang of, that yestreen,  
As the sweetest ever seen?

## IV

Yes, I think, were you beside them,  
Near the bed I die upon,—  
Though their beauty you denied them,  
As you stood there, looking down,  
You would truly  
Call them duly,  
For the love’s sake found therein,—  
‘Sweetest eyes, were ever seen.’

## V

And if *you* looked down upon them,  
And if *they* looked up to *you*,  
All the light which has foregone them  
Would be gathered back anew.  
They would truly  
Be as duly  
Love-transformed to beauty’s sheen,—  
‘Sweetest eyes, were ever seen.’

## VI

But, ah me! you only see me,  
In your thoughts of loving man,  
Smiling soft perhaps and dreamy  
Through the wavings of my fan,—  
And unweeting  
Go repeating,  
In your reverie serene,  
‘Sweetest eyes, were ever seen.’

## VII

While my spirit leans and reaches  
From my body still and pale.  
Fain to hear what tender speech is  
In your love to help my bale—  
O my poet,  
Come and show it!  
Come, of latest love, to glean  
‘Sweetest eyes, were ever seen.’

## VIII

O my poet, O my prophet,  
When you praised their sweetness so,  
Did you think, in singing of it,  
That it might be near to go?  
Had you fancies  
From their glances,  
That the grave would quickly screen  
‘Sweetest eyes, were ever seen’?

## IX

No reply! the fountain’s warble  
In the court-yard sounds alone.  
As the water to the marble  
So my heart falls with a moan  
From love-sighing  
To this dying.  
Death forerunneth Love to win  
‘Sweetest eyes, were ever seen.’

## X

Will you come? When I’m departed  
Where all sweetnesses are hid;  
Where thy voice, my tender-hearted,  
Will not lift up either lid.  
Cry, O lover,  
Love is over!  
Cry beneath the cypress green—  
‘Sweetest eyes, were ever seen.’

## XI

When the angelus is ringing,  
Near the convent will you walk,  
And recall the choral singing  
Which brought angels down our talk?  
Spirit-shriven  
I viewed Heaven,  
Till you smiled—‘Is earth unclean,  
Sweetest eyes, were ever seen’?

## XII

When beneath the palace-lattice,  
You ride slow as you have done,  
And you see a face there—that is  
Not the old familiar one,—  
Will you oftly  
Murmur softly,  
‘Here, ye watched me morn and e’en,  
Sweetest eyes, were ever seen’?

## XIII

When the palace-ladies, sitting  
 Round your gittern, shall have said,  
 'Poet, sing those verses written  
 For the lady who is dead,'  
 Will you tremble,  
 Yet dissemble,—  
 Or sing hoarse, with tears between,  
 'Sweetest eyes, were ever seen'?

## XIV

'Sweetest eyes!' how sweet in flowings  
 The repeated cadence is!  
 Though you sang a hundred poems,  
 Still the best one would be this.  
 I can hear it  
 'Twixt my spirit  
 And the earth-noise intervene—  
 'Sweetest eyes, were ever seen!'

## XV

But the priest waits for the praying,  
 And the choir are on their knees,  
 And the soul must pass away in  
 Strains more solemn high than these.  
*Miserere*  
 For the weary!  
 Oh, no longer for Catrine,  
 'Sweetest eyes, were ever seen!'

## XVI

Keep my ribbon, take and keep it  
 (I have loosed it from my hair)<sup>1</sup>,  
 Feeling, while you overweep it,  
 Not alone in your despair,  
 Since with saintly  
 Watch unfaintly  
 Out of heaven shall o'er you lean  
 'Sweetest eyes, were ever seen.'

## XVII

But—but *now*—yet unremoved  
 Up to Heaven, they glisten fast.  
 You may cast away, Belovèd,  
 In your future all my past.  
 Such old phrases  
 May be praises  
 For some fairer bosom-queen—  
 'Sweetest eyes, were ever seen!'

<sup>1</sup> She left him the ribbon from her hair.

## XVIII

Eyes of mine, what are ye doing?  
 Faithless, faithless,—praised amiss  
 If a tear be of your showing,  
 Dropt for any hope of HIS!  
 Death has boldness  
 Besides coldness,  
 If unworthy tears demean  
 'Sweetest eyes, were ever seen.'

## XIX

I will look out to his future;  
 I will bless it till it shine.  
 Should he ever be a suitor  
 Unto sweeter eyes than mine,  
 Sunshine gild them,  
 Angels shield them,  
 Whatsoever eyes terrene  
 Be the sweetest HIS have seen!

## LIFE AND LOVE

## I

Fast this Life of mine was dying,  
 Blind already and calm as death,  
 Snowflakes on her bosom lying  
 Scarcely heaving with her breath.

## II

Love came by, and having known her  
 In a dream of fabled lands,  
 Gently stooped, and laid upon her  
 Mystic chrism of holy hands;

## III

Drew his smile across her folded  
 Eyelids, as the swallow dips;  
 Breathed as finely as the cold did,  
 Through the locking of her lips.

## IV

So, when Life looked upward, being  
 Warmed and breathed on from above,  
 What sight could she have for seeing,  
 Evermore . . . but only Love?

## A DENIAL

## I

We have met late—it is too late to meet,  
 O friend, not more than friend!  
 Death's forecome shroud is tangled  
     round my feet,  
 And if I step or stir, I touch the end.  
 In this last jeopardy  
 Can I approach thee, I, who cannot move?  
 How shall I answer thy request for love?  
     Look in my face and see.

## II

I love thee not, I dare not love thee! go  
     In silence; drop my hand.  
 If thou seek roses, seek them where  
     they blow  
 In garden-alleys, not in desert-sand.  
     Can life and death agree,  
 That thou shouldst stoop thy song to  
     my complaint?  
 I cannot love thee. If the word is faint,  
     Look in my face and see.

## III

I might have loved thee in some former  
     days.  
 Oh, then, my spirits had leapt  
 As now they sink, at hearing thy love-  
     praise.  
 Before these faded cheeks were over-  
     wept,  
 \*Had this been asked of me,  
 To love thee with my whole strong  
     heart and head,—  
 I should have said still . . . yes, but  
     *smiled* and said,  
     'Look in my face and see!'

## IV

But now . . . God sees me, God, who  
     took my heart  
 And drowned it in life's surge.  
 In all your wide warm earth I have no  
     part—  
 A light song overcomes me like a dirge.  
     Could Love's great harmony  
 The saints' keep step to when their  
     bonds are loose,  
 Not weigh me down? am I a wife to  
     choose?  
     Look in my face and see.

## V

While I behold, as plain as one who  
     dreams,  
     Some woman of full worth,  
 Whose voice, as cadenced as a silver  
     stream's,  
 Shall prove the fountain-soul which  
     sends it forth;  
     One younger, more thought-free  
 And fair and gay, than I, thou must forget,  
 With brighter eyes than these . . . which  
     are not wet . . .  
     Look in my face and see!

## VI

So farewell thou, whom I have known  
     too late  
     To let thee come so near.  
 Be counted happy while men call thee  
     great,  
 And one beloved woman feels thee  
     dear!—  
     Not I!—that cannot be.  
 I am lost, I am changed,—I must go  
     farther, where  
 The change shall take me worse, and  
     no one dare  
     Look in my face to see.

## VII

Meantime I bless thee. By these  
     thoughts of mine  
     I bless thee from all such!  
 I bless thy lamp to oil, thy cup to wine,  
 Thy hearth to joy, thy hand to an equal  
     touch  
     Of loyal troth. For me,  
 I love thee not, I love thee not!—away!  
 Here's no more courage in my soul to say  
     'Look in my face and see.'

## PROOF AND DISPROOF

## I

Dost thou love me, my beloved?  
     Who shall answer yes or no?  
 What is proved or disproved  
     When my soul inquireth so,  
 Dost thou love me, my beloved?

## II

I have seen thy heart to-day,  
 Never open to the crowd,  
 While to love me ay and ay  
 Was the vow as it was vowed  
 By thine eyes of steadfast grey.

## III

Now I sit alone, alone—  
 And the hot tears break and burn.  
 Now, Belovèd, thou art gone,  
 Doubt and terror have their turn.  
 Is it love that I have known?

## IV

I have known some bitter things,—  
 Anguish, anger, solitude.  
 Year by year an evil brings,  
 Year by year denies a good;  
 March winds violate my springs.

## V

I have known how sickness bends,  
 I have known how sorrow breaks,—  
 How quick hopes have sudden ends,  
 How the heart thinks till it aches  
 Of the smile of buried friends.

## VI

Last, I have known *thee*, my brave  
 Noble thinker, lover, doer!  
 The best knowledge last I have.  
 But thou comest as the thrower  
 Of fresh flowers upon a grave.

## VII

Count what feelings used to move me!  
 Can this love assort with those?  
 Thou, who art so far above me,  
 Wilt thou stoop so, for repose?  
 Is it true that thou canst love me?

## VIII

Do not blame me if I doubt thee.  
 I can call love by its name  
 When thine arm is wrapt about me;  
 But even love seems not the same,  
 When I sit alone, without thee.

## IX

In thy clear eyes I descried  
 Many a proof of love, to-day;  
 But to-night, those unbelied  
 Speechful eyes being gone away,  
 There's the proof to seek, beside.

## X

Dost thou love me, my belovèd?  
 Only *thou* canst answer yes!  
 And, thou gone, the proof's disprovèd,  
 And the cry rings answerless—  
 Dost thou love me, my belovèd?

## QUESTION AND ANSWER

## I

Love you seek for, presupposes  
 Summer heat and sunny glow.  
 Tell me, do you find moss-roses  
 Budding, blooming in the snow?  
 Snow might kill the rose-tree's root—  
 Shake it quickly from your foot,  
 Lest it harm you as you go.

## II

From the ivy where it dapples  
 A grey ruin, stone by stone,—  
 Do you look for grapes or apples,  
 Or for sad green leaves alone?  
 Pluck the leaves off, two or three—  
 Keep them for morality  
 When you shall be safe and gone.

## INCLUSIONS

## I

Oh, wilt thou have my hand, Dear, to  
 lie along in thine?  
 As a little stone in a running stream, it  
 seems to lie and pine.  
 Now drop the poor pale hand, Dear, . .  
 unfit to plight with thine.

## II

Oh, wilt thou have my cheek, Dear,  
 drawn closer to thine own?  
 My cheek is white, my cheek is worn,  
 by many a tear run down.  
 Now leave a little space, Dear, . . lest it  
 should wet thine own.

## III

Oh, must thou have my soul, Dear, com-  
 mingled with thy soul?—  
 Red grows the cheek, and warm the  
 hand, . . the part is in the whole!  
 Nor hands nor cheeks keep separate,  
 when soul is joined to soul.

## INSUFFICIENCY

## I

THERE is no one beside thee and no one  
above thee,  
Thou standest alone as the nightingale  
sings!  
And my words that would praise thee  
are impotent things,  
For none can express thee though all  
should approve thee.  
I love thee so, Dear, that I only can  
love thee.

## II

Say, what can I do for thee? weary  
thee, grieve thee?  
Lean on thy shoulder, new burdens  
to add?  
Weep my tears over thee, making thee  
sad?  
Oh, hold me not—love me not! let me  
retrieve thee.  
I love thee so, Dear, that I only can  
leave thee.

THE LITTLE FRIEND<sup>1</sup>

WRITTEN IN THE BOOK WHICH SHE  
MADE AND SENT TO ME

τὸ δ' ἦδη ἐξ ὀφθαλμῶν ἀπελήλυθεν.  
MARCUS ANTONINUS.

THE book thou givest, dear as such,  
Shall bear thy dearer name;  
And many a word the leaves shall touch,  
For thee who form'dst the same!  
And on them many a thought shall grow  
'Neath memory's rain and sun,  
Of thee, glad child, who dost not know  
That thought and pain are one!

Yes! thoughts of thee, who satest oft,  
A while since, at my side—  
So wild to tame,—to move so soft,  
So very hard to chide:  
The childish vision at thine heart,  
The lesson on the knee;  
The wandering looks which *would* depart,  
Like gulls, across the sea!

<sup>1</sup> This and the following eight Poems first appeared in 1838, but were omitted in the Collected Editions of 1850 and 1856.

The laughter, which no half-belief  
In wrath could all suppress:  
The falling tears, which looked like grief,  
And were but gentleness:  
The fancies sent, for bliss, abroad,  
As Eden's were not done—  
Mistaking still the cherub's sword  
For shining of the sun!

The sportive speech with wisdom in 't—  
The question strange and bold—  
The childish fingers in the print  
Of God's creative hold:  
The praying words in whispers said,  
The sin with sobs confest;  
The leaning of the young meek head  
Upon the Saviour's breast!

The gentle consciousness of praise,  
With hues that went and came;  
The brighter blush, a word could raise,  
Were *that*—a father's name!  
The shadow on thy smile for each  
That on his face could fall!  
So quick hath love been, *thee* to teach,  
What soon it teacheth all.

Sit still as erst beside his feet!  
The future days are dim,—  
But those will seem to thee most sweet  
Which keep thee nearest *him*!  
Sit at his feet in quiet mirth,  
And let him see arise  
A clearer sun and greener earth  
Within thy loving eyes!—

Ah, loving eyes! that used to lift  
Your childhood to my face—  
That leave a memory on the gift  
I look on in your place—  
May bright-eyed hosts your guardians be  
From all but thankful tears,—  
While, brightly as ye turned on *me*,  
Ye meet th' advancing years!

## THE STUDENT

Τί οὖν τοῦτο πρὸς σέ; καὶ οὐδὲν λέγω ὅτι πρὸς  
τὸν πενήτικόν, ἀλλὰ πρὸς τὸν ζῶντα, τί ὁ ἐπαινος;  
MARCUS ANTONINUS.

'My midnight lamp is weary as my soul,  
And, being unimmortal, has gone out.  
And now alone yon moony lamp of  
heaven,  
Which God lit and not man, illuminates

These volumes, others wrote in weariness

As I have read them ; and this cheek and brow,

Whose paleness, burnèd in with heats of thought,

Would make an angel smile to see how ill

Clay thrust from Paradise consorts with mind—

If angels could, like men, smile bitterly.

‘Yet must my brow be paler! I have vowed

To clip it with the crown which cannot fade,

When it is faded. Not in vain ye cry,  
O glorious voices that survive the tongues

From whence was drawn your separate sovereignty—

For I would reign beside you! I would melt

The golden treasures of my health and life

Into that name! My lips are vowed apart  
From cheerful words; mine ears, from

pleasant sounds;  
Mine eyes, from sights God made so

beautiful,—  
My feet, from wanderings under shady

trees;  
Mine hands, from clasping of dear-loving

friends,—  
My very heart, from feelings which

move soft!  
Vowed am I from the day’s delight-  
some-

ness,  
And dreams of night! and when the

house is dumb  
In sleep, which is the pause ’twixt life

and life,  
I live and waken thus; and pluck away

Slumber’s sleek poppies from my pained  
lids—

Goadng my mind with thongs wrought  
by herself,

To toil and struggle along this mountain-  
path

Which hath no mountain-airs; until she  
sweat

Like Adam’s brow, and gasp, and rend  
away

In agony, her garment of the flesh!’

And so his midnight lamp was lit anew,  
And burned till morning. But his lamp  
of life

Till morning burned not! He was found  
embraced,

Close, cold, and stiff, by Death’s com-  
pelling sleep;

His breast and brow supported on a page  
Charactered over with a praise of *fame*,

Of its divineness and beatitude—  
Words which had often caused that heart

to throb,  
That cheek to burn; though silent lay

they now,  
Without a single beating in the pulse,

And all the fever gone!

I saw a bay  
Spring verdant from a newly-fashioned  
grave.

The grass upon the grave was verdanter,  
*That* being watered by the eyes of One

Who bore not to look up toward the tree!  
Others looked on it—some, with passing

glance,  
Because the light wind stirrèd in its

leaves;  
And some, with sudden lighting of the soul

In admiration’s ecstasy!—Aye! some  
Did wag their heads like oracles, and say,

‘Tis very well!’—but none remembered  
The heart which housed the root, except

that ONE  
Whose sight was lost in weeping!

Is it thus,  
Ambition, idol of the intellect?

Shall we drink aconite, alone to use  
Thy golden bowl! and sleep ourselves

to death—  
To dream thy visions about life! O Power

That art a very feebleness!—before  
Thy clayey feet we bend our knees of clay,

And round thy senseless brow bind  
diadems

With paralytic hands, and shout ‘a god,’  
With voices mortal hoarse! Who can

discern  
Th’ infirmities they share in? Being blind,

We cannot see thy blindness: being weak,  
We cannot feel thy weakness: being low,

We cannot mete thy baseness: being  
unwise,

We cannot understand thy idiocy!

## STANZAS

I MAY sing ; but minstrel's singing  
Ever ceaseeth with his playing.  
I may smile ; but time is bringing  
Thoughts for smiles to wear away in.  
I may view thee, mutely loving ;  
But *shall* view thee so in dying !  
I may sigh ; but life's removing,  
And with breathing endeth sighing !  
Be it so

When no song of mine comes near thee,  
Will its memory fail to soften ?  
When no smile of mine can cheer thee,  
Will thy smile be used as often ?  
When my looks the darkness boundeth,  
Will thine own be lighted after ?  
When my sigh no longer soundeth,  
Wilt thou list another's laughter ?  
Be it so !

## THE YOUNG QUEEN

This awful responsibility is imposed upon me so suddenly and at so early a period of my life, that I should feel myself utterly oppressed by the burden, were I not sustained by the hope that Divine Providence, which has called me to this work, will give me strength for the performance of it.—*The Queen's Declaration in Council.*

THE shroud is yet unspread  
To wrap our crowned dead ;  
His soul hath scarcely hearkened for the  
thrilling word of doom ;  
And Death, that makes serene  
Even brows where crowns have been,  
Hath scarcely time to meeten his for  
silence of the tomb.

Saint Paul's king-dirging note  
The city's heart hath smote—  
The city's heart is struck with thought  
more solemn than the tone!  
A shadow sweeps apace  
Before the nation's face,  
Confusing in a shapeless blot the sepul-  
chre and throne.

The palace sounds with wail—  
The courtly dames are pale—  
A widow o'er the purple bows, and  
    weeps its splendour dim :  
And we who hold the boon,  
A king for freedom won,  
Do feel eternity rise up between our  
    thanks and him.

And while all things express  
All glory's nothingness,  
A royal maiden treadeth firm where *that*  
departed trod !  
The deathly scented crown  
Weighs her shining ringlets down ;  
But calm she lifts her trusting face, and  
calleth upon God.

Her thoughts are deep within her :  
No outward pageants win her  
From memories that in her soul are  
    rolling wave on wave—  
Her palace walls enring  
The dust that was a king—  
And very cold beneath her feet, she feels  
    her father's grave.

And One, as fair as she,  
Can scarce forgotten be,—  
Who clasped a little infant dead, for all  
a kingdom's worth!  
The mournèd, blessèd One,  
Who views Jehovah's throne,  
Ay smiling to the angels, that she lost  
a throne on earth.

Perhaps our youthful Queen  
Remembers what has been—  
Her childhood's rest by loving heart, and  
sport on grassy sod—  
Alas! can others wear  
A mother's heart for her?  
But calm she lifts her trusting face, and  
calleth upon God.

Yea! call on God, thou maiden  
Of spirit nobly laden,  
And leave such happy days behind, for  
happy-making years!  
A nation looks to thee  
For steadfast sympathy:  
Make room within thy bright clear eyes  
for all its gathered tears.

And so the grateful isles  
Shall give thee back their smiles,  
And as thy mother joys in thee, in them  
shalt *thou* rejoice ;  
Rejoice to meekly bow  
A somewhat paler brow,  
While the King of kings shall bless thee  
by the British people's voice !

## VICTORIA'S TEARS

Hark! the reiterated clangour sounds!  
Now murmurs, like the sea or like the storm,  
Or like the flames on forests, move and mount  
From rank to rank, and loud and louder roll,  
Till all the people is one vast applause.

LANDOR'S *Gebir*.

'O MAIDEN! heir of kings!  
A king has left his place!  
The majesty of Death has swept  
All other from his face!  
And thou upon thy mother's breast  
No longer lean adown,  
But take the glory for the rest,  
And rule the land that loves thee best!'

She heard, and wept—  
She wept, to wear a crown!

They decked her courtly halls;  
They reined her hundred steeds;  
They shouted at her palace gate,  
'A noble Queen succeeds!'  
Her name has stirred the mountain's  
sleep,  
Her praise has filled the town!  
And mourners God had stricken deep,  
Looked hearkening up, and did not weep.  
Alone she wept,  
Who wept, to wear a crown!

She saw no purples shine,  
For tears had dimmed her eyes;  
She only knew her childhood's flowers  
Were happier pageantries!  
And while her heralds played the part,  
For million shouts to drown—  
'God save the Queen' from hill to mart,—  
She heard through all her beating heart,  
And turned and wept—  
She wept, to wear a crown!

God save thee, weeping Queen!  
Thou shalt be well beloved!  
The tyrant's sceptre cannot move,  
As those pure tears have moved!  
The nature in thine eyes we see,  
That tyrants cannot own—  
The love that guardeth liberties!  
Strange blessing on the nation lies,  
Whose Sovereign wept—  
Yea! wept, to wear its crown!

God bless thee, weeping Queen,  
With blessing more divine!  
And fill with happier love than earth's  
That tender heart of thine!  
That when the thrones of earth shall be  
As low as graves brought down,  
A pierced Hand may give to thee  
The crown which angels shout to see!  
Thou wilt not weep  
To wear that heavenly crown!

## VANITIES

From fading things, fond men, lift your desire.  
DRUMMOND.

COULD ye be very blest in hearkening  
Youth's often danced-to melodies—  
Hearing it piped, the midnight darkening  
Doth come to show the starry skies,—  
To freshen garden-flowers, the rain!—  
It is in vain, it is in vain!

Could ye be very blest in urging  
A captive nation's strength to thunder  
Out into foam, and with its surging  
The Xerxean fetters break asunder?  
The storm is cruel as the chain!—  
It is in vain, it is in vain!

Could ye be very blest in paling  
Your brows with studious nights and  
days,  
When like your lamps your life is fading,  
And sighs, not breath, are wrought from  
praise?  
Your tombs, not ye, that praise retain—  
It is in vain, it is in vain!

Yea! but ye *could* be very blest,  
If some ye nearest love were nearest!  
Must *they* not love when loved best?  
Must *ye* not happiest love when dearest?  
Alas! how hard to feel again,—  
It is in vain, it is in vain!

For those ye love are not unsighing,—  
They are unchanging least of all:  
And ye the loved—ah! no denying,  
Will leave your lips beneath the pall,  
When passioned ones have o'er it said—  
'It is in vain, it is in vain!'

## A SUPPLICATION FOR LOVE

## HYMN I

The Lord Jesus, although gone to the Father, and we see Him no more, is still present with His Church; and in His heavenly glory expends upon her as intense a love, as in the agony of the garden, and the crucifixion of the tree. Those eyes that wept, still gaze upon her.—*Recalled words of an extempore Discourse, preached at Sidmouth, 1833.*

God, namèd Love, whose fount Thou art,  
Thy crownless Church before Thee  
stands,

With too much hating in her heart,  
And too much striving in her hands!

O loving Lord! O slain for love!  
Thy blood upon Thy garments came—  
Inwrap their folds our brows above,  
Before we tell Thee all our shame!

'Love as I loved you,' was the sound  
That on Thy lips expiring sate!  
Sweet words, in bitter strivings drowned!  
We hated as the worldly hate.

The spear that pierced for love Thy side,  
We dared for wrathful use to crave;  
And with our cruel noise denied  
Its silence, to Thy blood-red grave!

Ah, blood! that speaketh more of love  
Than Abel's—could we speak like Cain,  
And grieve and scare that holy Dove,  
The parting love-gift of the Slain!

Yet, Lord, Thy wrongèd love fulfil!  
Thy Church, though fallen, before  
Thee stands—

Behold, the voice is Jacob's still,  
Albeit the hands are Esau's hands!

Hast Thou no tears, like those besprent  
Upon Thy Zion's ancient part?  
No moving looks, like those which sent  
Their softness through a traitor's heart?

No touching tale of anguish dear;  
Whereby like children we may creep,  
All trembling, to each other near,  
And view each other's face, and weep?

Oh, move us—Thou hast power to  
move—

One in the one Beloved to be!  
Teach us the heights and depths of love—  
Give THINE—that we may love like  
THEE!

## THE MEDIATOR

## HYMN II

As the greatest of all sacrifices was required,  
we may be assured that no other would have  
sufficed.—*BOYD'S Essay on the Atonement.*

How high Thou art! our songs can  
own

No music Thou couldst stoop to hear!  
But still the Son's expiring groan  
Is vocal in the Father's ear.

How pure Thou art! our hands are dyed  
With curses, red with murder's hue—  
But HE hath stretched His hands to hide  
The sins that pierced them from Thy  
view.

How strong Thou art! we tremble lest  
The thunders of Thine arm be moved—  
But HE is lying on Thy breast,  
And Thou must clasp Thy best Beloved!

How kind Thou art! Thou didst not  
choose  
To joy in Him for ever so;  
But that embrace Thou wilt not loose  
For vengeance, didst for love forgo!

High God, and pure, and strong, and  
kind!

The low, the foul, the feeble, spare!  
Thy brightness in His face we find—  
Behold our darkness only there!

## THE WEeping SAVIOUR

## HYMN III

— tell  
Whether His countenance can thee affright,  
Tears in His eyes quench the amazing light.  
DONNE.

WHEN Jesus' friend had ceased to be,  
Still Jesus' heart its friendship kept—  
'Where have ye laid him?'—'Come and  
see!'  
But ere His eyes could see, they wept.

Lord! not in sepulchres alone,  
Corruption's worm is rank and free;  
The shroud of death our bosoms own—  
Theshades of sorrow! Come and see!

Come, Lord! God's image cannot shine  
Where sin's funeral darkness  
lowers—  
Come! turn those weeping eyes of Thine  
Upon these sinning souls of ours!

And let those eyes, with shepherd  
care,  
Their moving watch above us keep;  
Till love the strength of sorrow wear,  
And as thou weepedst, *we* may weep!

For surely we may weep to know,  
So dark and deep our spirit's stain;  
That had Thy blood refused to flow,  
Thy very tears had flowed in vain.

## SONNETS FROM THE PORTUGUESE

### I

I THOUGHT once how Theocritus had sung  
Of the sweet years, the dear and wished-  
for years,  
Who each one in a gracious hand appears  
To bear a gift for mortals, old or young:  
And, as I mused it in his antique tongue,  
I saw, in gradual vision through my tears,  
The sweet, sad years, the melancholy  
years,  
Those of my own life, who by turns had  
flung  
A shadow across me. Straightway I  
was 'ware,  
So weeping, how a mystic Shape did  
move  
Behind me, and drew me backward by  
the hair,  
And a voice said in mastery while I  
strove, . .  
'Guess now who holds thee?'—'Death,'  
I said. But, there,  
The silver answer rang, . . 'Not Death,  
but Love.'

### II

BUT only three in all God's universe  
Have heard this word thou hast said,—  
Himself, beside  
Thee speaking, and me listening! and  
replied  
One of us . . . *that* was God, . . and laid  
the curse  
So darkly on my eyelids, as to amerce  
My sight from seeing thee,—that if  
I had died,

The deathweights, placed there, would  
have signified  
Less absolute exclusion. 'Nay' is worse  
From God than from all others, O my  
friend!  
Men could not part us with their worldly  
jars,  
Nor the seas change us, nor the tem-  
pests bend;  
Our hands would touch for all the  
mountain-bars,—  
And, heaven being rolled between us at  
the end,  
We should but vow the faster for the stars.

### III

UNLIKE are we, unlike, O princely  
Heart!  
Unlike our uses and our destinies.  
Our ministering two angels look surprise  
On one another, as they strike athwart  
Their wings in passing. Thou, betlink  
thee, art  
A guest for queens to social pageantries,  
With gages from a hundred brighter eyes  
Than tears even can make mine, to ply  
thy part  
Of chief musician. What hast *thou* to do  
With looking from the lattice-lights at me,  
A poor, tired, wandering singer, . . sing-  
ing through  
The dark, and leaning up a cypress tree!  
The chrim is on thine head,—on mine,  
the dew,—  
And Death must dig the level where  
these agree.

## IV

THOU hast thy calling to some palace-floor,  
 Most gracious singer of high poems! where  
 The dancers will break footing, from the care  
 Of watching up thy pregnant lips for more.  
 And dost thou lift this house's latch too poor  
 For hand of thine? and canst thou think and bear  
 To let thy music drop here unaware  
 In folds of golden fullness at my door?  
 Look up and see the casement broken in,  
 The bats and owlets builders in the roof!  
 My cricket chirps against thy mandolin.  
 Hush, call no echo up in further proof  
 Of desolation! there's a voice within  
 That weeps . . . as thou must sing . . . alone, aloof.

## V

I LIFT my heavy heart up solemnly,  
 As once Electra her sepulchral urn,  
 And, looking in thine eyes, I overturn  
 The ashes at thy feet. Behold and see  
 What a great heap of grief lay hid in me,  
 And how the red wild sparkles dimly burn  
 Through the ashen greyness. If thy foot in scorn  
 Could tread them out to darkness utterly,  
 It might be well perhaps. But if instead  
 Thou wait beside me for the wind to blow  
 The grey dust up, . . . those laurels on thine head,  
 O my Belovèd, will not shield thee so,  
 That none of all the fires shall scorch and shred  
 The hair beneath. Stand farther off  
 then! go.

## VI

Go from me. Yet I feel that I shall stand  
 Henceforward in thy shadow. Never-  
 more  
 Alone upon the threshold of my door  
 Of individual life, I shall command  
 The uses of my soul, nor lift my hand

Serenely in the sunshine as before,  
 Without the sense of that which I  
 forbore, . . .  
 Thy touch upon the palm. The widest  
 land  
 Doom takes to part us, leaves thy heart  
 in mine  
 With pulses that beat double. What I do  
 And what I dream include thee, as the  
 wine  
 Must taste of its own grapes. And  
 when I sue  
 God for myself, He hears that name of  
 thine,  
 And sees within my eyes the tears of two.

## VII

THE face of all the world is changed,  
 I think,  
 Since first I heard the footsteps of thy soul  
 Move still, oh, still, beside me, as they  
 stole  
 Betwixt me and the dreadful outer brink  
 Of obvious death, where I, who thought  
 to sink,  
 Was caught up into love, and taught  
 the whole  
 Of life in a new rhythm. The cup of dole  
 God gave for baptism, I am fain to drink,  
 And praise its sweetness, Sweet, with  
 thee anear.  
 The names of country, heaven, are  
 changed away  
 For where thou art or shalt be, there or  
 here;  
 And this . . . this lute and song . . .  
 loved yesterday  
 (The singing angels know) are only dear,  
 Because thy name moves right in what  
 they say.

## VIII

WHAT can I give thee back, O liberal  
 And princely giver, who hast brought  
 the gold  
 And purple of thine heart, unstained,  
 untold,  
 And laid them on the outside of the wall  
 For such as I to take or leave withal,  
 In unexpected largesse? am I cold,  
 Ungrateful, that for these most manifold  
 High gifts, I render nothing back at all?  
 Not so; not cold,—but very poor instead.

Ask God who knows. For frequent tears  
have run  
The colours from my life, and left so dead  
And pale a stuff, it were not fitly done  
To give the same as pillow to thy head.  
Go farther! let it serve to trample on.

## IX

CAN it be right to give what I can give?  
To let thee sit beneath the fall of tears  
As salt as mine, and hear the sighing  
years  
Re-sighing on my lips renunciative  
Through those infrequent smiles which  
fail to live  
For all thy adjurations! O my fears,  
That this can scarce be right! We are  
not peers,  
So to be lovers; and I own, and grieve,  
That givers of such gifts as mine are, must  
Be counted with the ungenerous. Out,  
alas!  
I will not soil thy purple with my dust,  
Nor breathe my poison on thy Venice-  
glass,  
Nor give thee any love . . . which were  
unjust.  
Beloved, I only love thee! let it pass.

## X

YET, love, mere love, is beautiful indeed  
And worthy of acceptance. Fire is bright,  
Let temple burn, or flax. An equal light  
Leaps in the flame from cedar-plank or  
weed.  
And love is fire; and when I say at need  
*I love thee . . . mark! . . . I love thee! . . .* in  
thy sight  
I stand transfigured, glorified aright,  
With conscience of the new rays that  
proceed  
Out of my face toward thine. There's  
nothing low  
In love, when love the lowest: meanest  
creatures  
Who love God, God accepts while  
loving so.  
And what I *feel*, across the inferior  
features  
Of what I *am*, doth flash itself, and show  
How that great work of Love enhances  
Nature's.

## XI

AND therefore if to love can be desert,  
I am not all unworthy. Cheeks as pale  
As these you see, and trembling knees  
that fail  
To bear the burden of a heavy heart,—  
This weary minstrel-life that once was  
girt  
To climb Aornus, and can scarce avail  
To pipenow 'gainst the valley nightingale  
A melancholy music,—why advert  
To these things? O Belovèd, it is plain  
I am not of thy worth nor for thy place!  
And yet, because I love thee, I obtain  
From that same love this vindicating  
grace,  
To live on still in love, and yet in vain, . . .  
To bless thee, yet renounce thee to thy  
face.

## XII

INDEED this very love which is my boast,  
And which, when rising up from breast  
to brow,  
Doth crown me with a ruby large enow  
To draw men's eyes and prove the  
inner cost, . . .  
This love even, all my worth, to the  
utmost,  
I should not love withal, unless that thou  
Hadst set me an example, shown me how,  
When first thine earnest eyes with mine  
were crossed,  
And love called love. And thus, I  
cannot speak  
Of love even, as a good thing of my own.  
Thy soul hath snatched up mine all  
faint and weak,  
And placed it by thee on a golden  
throne,—  
And that I love (O soul, we must be  
meek!)  
Is by thee only, whom I love alone.

## XIII

AND wilt thou have me fashion into speech  
The love I bear thee, finding words  
enough,  
And hold the torch out, while the winds  
are rough,  
Between our faces, to cast light on  
each!—  
I drop it at thy feet. I cannot teach

My hand to hold my spirit so far off  
From myself . . . me . . . that I should  
bring thee proof

In words, of love hid in me out of reach.  
Nay, let the silence of my womanhood  
Commend my woman-love to thy belief,—  
Seeing that I stand unwon, however  
wooded,

And read the garment of my life, in brief,  
By a most dauntless, voiceless fortitude,  
Lest one touch of this heart convey its  
grief.

## XIV

If thou must love me, let it be for nought  
Except for love's sake only. Do not say  
'I love her for her smile . . . her look . . .  
her way

Of speaking gently, . . for a trick of  
thought  
That falls in well with mine, and certes  
brought

A sense of pleasant ease on such a day'—  
For these things in themselves, Belovèd,  
may

Be changed, or change for thee,—and  
love, so wrought,

May be unwrought so. Neither love  
me for

Thine own dear pity's wiping my cheeks  
dry,—

A creature might forget to weep, who  
bore

Thy comfort long, and lose thy love  
thereby!

But love me for love's sake, that evermore  
Thou mayst love on, through love's  
eternity.

## XV

Accuse me not, beseech thee, that I wear  
Too calm and sad a face in front of thine;  
For we two look two ways, and cannot  
shine

With the same sunlight on our brow  
and hair.

On me thou lookest, with no doubting  
care,

As on a bee shut in a crystalline,—  
Since sorrow hath shut me safe in love's  
divine,

And to spread wing and fly in the  
outer air

Were most impossible failure, if I strove

To fail so. But I look on thee . . . on thee . . .  
Beholding, besides love, the end of love,  
Hearing oblivion beyond memory!  
As one who sits and gazes from above,  
Over the rivers to the bitter sea.

## XVI

And yet, because thou overcomest so,  
Because thou art more noble and like  
a king,

Thou canst prevail against my fears and  
filing

Thy purple round me, till my heart  
shall grow

Too close against thine heart, henceforth  
to know

How it shook when alone. Why,  
conquering

May prove as lordly and complete  
a thing

In lifting upward, as in crushing low!  
And as a vanquished soldier yields his  
sword

To one who lifts him from the bloody  
earth,—

Even so, Belovèd, I at last record,  
Here ends my strife. If thou invite me  
forth,

I rise above abasement at the word.  
Make thy love larger to enlarge my worth.

## XVII

My poet, thou canst touch on all the notes  
God set between His After and Before,  
And strike up and strike off the general  
roar

Of the rushing worlds, a melody that floats  
In a serene air purely. Antidotes

Of medicated music, answering for  
Mankind's forlornest uses, thou canst  
pour

From thence into their ears. God's  
will devotes

Thine to such ends, and mine to wait  
on thine.

How, Dearest, wilt thou have me for  
most use?

A hope, to sing by gladly? . . . or a fine  
Sad memory, with thy songs to interfuse?

A shade, in which to sing . . . of palm  
or pine?

A grave, on which to rest from singing? . . .  
Choose.

## XVIII

I NEVER gave a lock of hair away  
 To a man, dearest, except this to thee,  
 Which now upon my fingers thoughtfully  
 I ring out to the full brown length and say  
 'Take it.' My day of youth went  
 yesterday;  
 My hair no longer bound to my foot's glee,  
 Nor plant I it from rose or myrtle-tree,  
 As girls do, any more. It only may  
 Now shade on two pale cheeks, the  
 mark of tears,  
 Taught drooping from the head that  
 hangs aside  
 Through sorrow's trick. I thought the  
 funeral-shears  
 Would take this first, but Love is  
 justified,—  
 Take it, thou, . . . finding pure, from all  
 those years,  
 The kiss my mother left here when she  
 died.

## XIX

THE soul's Rialto hath its merchandise;  
 I barter curl for curl upon that mart.  
 And from my poet's forehead to my heart,  
 Receive this lock which outweighs  
 argosies,—  
 As purple black, as erst, to Pindar's eyes,  
 The dim purpleal tresses gloomed  
 athwart  
 The nine white Muse-brows. For this  
 counterpart, . .  
 Thy bay-crown's shade, Belovèd, I  
 surmise,  
 Still lingers on thy curl, it is so black  
 Thus, with a fillet of smooth-kissing  
 breath,  
 I tie the shadow safe from gliding back,  
 And lay the gift where nothing hindereth,  
 Here on my heart, as on thy brow, to lack  
 No natural heat till mine grows cold in  
 death.

## XX

BELOVÈD, my Belovèd, when I think  
 That thou wast in the world a year ago,  
 What time I sate alone here in the snow  
 And saw no footprint, heard the silence  
 sink  
 No moment at thy voice, . . but, link by link,  
 Went counting all my chains, as if that so  
 They never could fall off at any blow

Struck by thy possible hand . . . why,  
 thus I drink  
 Of life's great cup of wonder! Wonderful,  
 Never to feel thee thrill the day or night  
 With personal act or speech,—nor ever  
 cull  
 Some prescience of thee with the  
 blossoms white  
 Thou sawest growing! Atheists are as  
 dull,  
 Who cannot guess God's presence out  
 of sight.

## XXI

SAY over again, and yet once over again,  
 That thou dost love me. Though the  
 word repeated  
 Should seem 'a cuckoo-song,' as thou  
 dost treat it,  
 Remember, never to the hill or plain,  
 Valley and wood, without her cuckoo-  
 strain,  
 Comes the fresh Spring in all her green  
 completed.  
 Belovèd, I, amid the darkness greeted  
 By a doubtful spirit-voice, in that doubt's  
 pain  
 Cry . . . 'Speak once more . . . thou  
 lovest!' Who can fear  
 Too many stars, though each in heaven  
 shall roll—  
 Too many flowers, though each shall  
 crown the year?  
 Say thou dost love me, love me, love  
 me—toll  
 The silver iterance!—only minding, dear,  
 To love me also in silence, with thy soul.

## XXII

WHEN our two souls stand up erect and  
 strong,  
 Face to face, silent, drawing nigh and  
 nigher,  
 Until the lengthening wings break into  
 fire  
 At either curvèd point,—what bitter  
 wrong  
 Can the earth do to us, that we should  
 not long  
 Be here contented! Think. In mounting  
 higher,  
 The angels would press on us, and aspire  
 To drop some golden orb of perfect song  
 Into our deep, dear silence. Let us stay.

Rather on earth, Belovèd,—where the  
unfit

Contrarious moods of men recoil away  
And isolate pure spirits, and permit  
A place to stand and love in for a day,  
With darkness and the death-hour  
rounding it.

## XXIII

Is it indeed so? If I lay here dead,  
Wouldst thou miss any life in losing mine?  
And would the sun for thee more coldly  
shine,

Because of grave-damps falling round  
my head?

I marvelled, my Belovèd, when I read  
Thy thought so in the letter. I am thine—  
But . . . so much to thee! Can I pour  
thy wine

While my hands tremble! Then my  
soul, instead

Of dreams of death, resumes life's lower  
range.

Then, love me, Love! look on me . . .  
breathe on me!

As brighter ladies do not count it strange,  
For love, to give up acres and degree,  
I yield the grave for thy sake, and ex-  
change

My near sweet view of Heaven, for  
earth with thee!

## XXIV

LET the world's sharpness like a clasp-  
ing knife

Shut in upon itself and do no harm  
In this close hand of Love, now soft and  
warm,

And let us hear no sound of human strife  
After the click of the shutting. Life to  
life—

I lean upon thee, dear, without alarm,  
And feel as safe as guarded by a charm  
Against the stab of worldlings, who if rife  
Are weak to injure. Very whitely still  
The lilies of our lives may reassure  
Their blossoms from their roots, acces-  
sible

Alone to heavenly dews that drop not  
fewer:

Growing straight, out of man's reach, on  
the hill.

God only, who made us rich, can make  
us poor.

## XXV

A HEAVY heart, Belovèd, have I borne  
From year to year until I saw thy face,  
And sorrow after sorrow took the place  
Of all those natural joys as lightly worn  
As the stringed pearls . . . each lifted in  
its turn

By a beating heart at dance-time.  
Hopes apace

Were changed to long despairs, till God's  
own grace

Could scarcely lift above the world forlorn  
My heavy heart. Then *thou* didst bid  
me bring

And let it drop adown thy calmly great  
Deep being! Fast it sinketh, as a thing  
Which its own nature doth precipitate,  
While thine doth close above it, mediating  
Betwixt the stars and the unaccomplished  
fate.

## XXVI

I LIVED with visions for my company,  
Instead of men and women, years ago,  
And found them gentle mates, nor  
thought to know

A sweeter music than they played to me.  
But soon their trailing purple was not  
free

Of this world's dust,—their lutes did  
silent grow,

And I myself grew faint and blind below  
Their vanishing eyes. Then *thou* didst  
come . . . to be,

Belovèd, what they seemed. Their  
shining fronts,

Their songs, their splendours (better,  
yet the same,

As river-water hallowed into founts),  
Met in thee, and from out thee overcame  
My soul with satisfaction of all wants—  
Because God's gifts put man's best  
dreams to shame.

## XXVII

My own Belovèd, who hast lifted me  
From this drear flat of earth where I was  
thrown,

And, in betwixt the languid ringlets,  
blown

A life-breath, till the forehead hopefully  
Shines out again, as all the angels see,

Before thy saving kiss! My own, my own,  
 Who camest to me when the world was  
     gone,  
 And I who looked for only God, found  
     thee!  
 I find thee; I am safe, and strong, and glad.  
 As one who stands in dewless asphodel,  
 Looks backward on the tedious time he  
     had  
 In the upper life,—so I, with bosom-swell,  
 Make witness, here, between the good  
     and bad,  
 That Love, as strong as Death, retrieves  
     as well.

## XXVIII

My letters! all dead paper, . . . mute and  
     white :—  
 And yet they seem alive and quivering  
 Against my tremulous hands which loose  
     the string  
 And let them drop down on my knee  
     to-night.  
 This said, . . . he wished to have me in  
     his sight  
 Once, as a friend: this fixed a day in spring  
 To come and touch my hand . . . a simple  
     thing,  
 Yet I wept for it!—this, . . . the paper's  
     light . . .  
 Said, *Dear, I love thee*; and I sank and  
     quailed  
 As if God's future thundered on my past.  
 This said, *I am thine*—and so its ink has  
     paled  
 With lying at my heart that beat too fast.  
 And this . . . O Love, thy words have ill  
     availed,  
 If, what this said, I dared repeat at last!

## XXIX

I THINK of thee!—my thoughts do twine  
     and bud  
 About thee, as wild vines, about a tree,  
 Put out broad leaves, and soon there's  
     nought to see  
 Except the straggling green which hides  
     the wood.  
 Yet, O my palm-tree, be it understood  
 I will not have my thoughts instead of thee  
 Who art dearer, better! rather instantly  
 Renew thy presence. As a strong tree  
     should,

Rustle thy boughs and set thy trunk all  
     bare,  
 And let these bands of greenery which  
     insphere thee,  
 Drop heavily down, . . . burst, shattered,  
     everywhere!  
 Because, in this deep joy to see and hear  
     thee  
 And breathe within thy shadow a new air,  
 I do not think of thee—I am too near thee.

## XXX

I SEE thine image through my tears to-  
     night,  
 And yet to-day I saw thee smiling. How  
 Refer the cause!—Beloved, is it thou  
 Or I, who makes me sad? The acolyte  
 Amid the chanted joy and thankful rite,  
 May so fall flat, with pale insensate brow,  
 On the altar-stair. I hear thy voice and  
     vow  
 Perplexed, uncertain, since thou art out  
     of sight,  
 As he, in his swooning ears, the choir's  
     amen.  
 Beloved, dost thou love? or did I see all  
 The glory as I dreamed, and fainted when  
 Too vehement light dilated my ideal,  
 For my soul's eyes? Will that light  
     come again,  
 As now these tears come . . . falling hot  
     and real?

## XXXI

THOU comest! all is said without a word.  
 I sit beneath thy looks, as children do  
 In the noon-sun, with souls that tremble  
     through  
 Their happy eyelids from an unaverred  
 Yet prodigal inward joy. Behold, I erred  
 In that last doubt! and yet I cannot rue  
 The sin most, but the occasion . . . that  
     we two  
 Should for a moment stand unministered  
 By a mutual presence. Ah, keep near  
     and close,  
 Thou dovelike help! and, when my fears  
     would rise,  
 With thy broad heart serenely interpose.  
 Brood down with thy divine sufficiencies  
 These thoughts which tremble when  
     bereft of those,  
 Like callow birds left desert to the skies.

## XXXII

THE first time that the sun rose on thine  
oath  
To love me, I looked forward to the moon  
To slacken all those bonds which seemed  
too soon  
And quickly tied to make a lasting troth.  
Quick-loving hearts, I thought, may  
quickly loathe;  
And, looking on myself, I seemed not one  
For such man's love!—more like an out  
of tune  
Worn viol, a good singer would be wroth  
To spoil his song with, and which,  
snatched in haste,  
Is laid down at the first ill-sounding note.  
I did not wrong myself so, but I placed  
A wrong on *thee*. For perfect strains  
may float  
'Neath master-hands, from instruments  
defaced,—  
And great souls, at one stroke, may do  
and dote.

## XXXIII

Yes, call me by my pet-name! let me hear  
The name I used to run at, when a child,  
From innocent play, and leave the cow-  
slips piled,  
To glance up in some face that proved  
me dear  
With the look of its eyes. I miss the clear  
Fond voices, which, being drawn and  
reconciled  
Into the music of Heaven's undefiled,  
Call me no longer. Silence on the bier,  
While I call God . . . call God!—So let  
thy mouth  
Be heir to those who are now exanimate.  
Gather the north flowers to complete the  
south,  
And catch the early love up in the late.  
Yes, call me by that name,—and I, in  
truth,  
With the same heart, will answer, and  
not wait.

## XXXIV

WITH the same heart, I said, I'll answer  
thee  
As those, when thou shalt call me by my  
name—  
Lo, the vain promise! is the same, the  
same,

Perplexed and ruffled by life's strategy?  
When called before, I told how hastily  
I dropped my flowers or brake off from  
a game,  
To run and answer with the smile that  
came  
At play last moment, and went on with me  
Through my obedience. When I answer  
now,  
I drop a grave thought—break from  
solitude;  
Yet still my heart goes to thee . . . ponder  
how . . .  
Not as to a single good, but all my good!  
Lay thy hand on it, best one, and allow  
That no child's foot could run fast as this  
blood.

## XXXV

If I leave all for thee, wilt thou exchange  
And be all to me? Shall I never miss  
Home-talk and blessing and the common  
kiss  
That comes to each in turn, nor count it  
strange,  
When I look up, to drop on a new range  
Of walls and floors . . . another home  
than this?  
Nay, wilt thou fill that place by me  
which is  
Filled by dead eyes too tender to know  
change?  
That's hardest. If to conquer love, has  
tried,  
To conquer grief, tries more . . . as all  
things prove;  
For grief indeed is love and grief beside.  
Alas, I have grieved so I am hard to love.  
Yet love me—wilt thou? Open thine  
heart wide,  
And fold within, the wet wings of thy  
dove.

## XXXVI

WHEN we met first and loved, I did not  
build  
Upon the event with marble. Could it  
mean  
To last, a love set pendulous between  
Sorrow and sorrow? Nay, I rather  
thrilled,  
Distrusting every light that seemed to  
gild

The onward path, and feared to overlean  
 A finger even. And, though I have  
     grown serene  
 And strong since then, I think that God  
     has willed  
 A still renewable fear . . . O love,  
     O troth . . .  
 Lest these enclasped hands should never  
     hold,  
 This mutual kiss drop down between us  
     both  
 As an unowned thing, once the lips being  
     cold.  
 And Love, befale! if he, to keep one oath,  
 Must lose one joy, by his life's star  
     foretold.

## XXXVII

PARDON, oh, pardon, that my soul should  
     make  
 Of all that strong divineness which I  
     know  
 For thine and thee, an image only so  
 Formed of the sand, and fit to shift and  
     break.  
 It is that distant years which did not take  
 Thy sovereignty, recoiling with a blow,  
 Have forced my swimming brain to  
     undergo  
 Their doubt and dread, and blindly to  
     forsake  
 The purity of likeness, and distort  
 Thy worthiest love to a worthless  
     counterfeit.  
 As if a shipwrecked Pagan, safe in port,  
 His guardian sea-god to commemorate.  
 Should set a sculptured porpoise, gills  
     a-snort  
 And vibrant tail, within the temple-gate.

## XXXVIII

FIRST time he kissed me, he but only  
     kissed  
 The fingers of this hand wherewith I  
     write;  
 And, ever since, it grew more clean and  
     white, . . .  
 Slow to world-greetings . . . quick with  
     its 'Oh, list,'  
 When the angels speak. A ring of  
     amethyst  
 I could not wear here, plainer to my sight,  
 Than that first kiss. The second passed  
     in height

The first, and sought the forehead, and  
     half missed,  
 Half falling on the hair. Oh, beyond  
     need!  
 That was the chrism of love, which love's  
     own crown,  
 With sanctifying sweetness, did precede.  
 The third upon my lips was folded down  
 In perfect, purple state; since when,  
     indeed,  
 I have been proud and said, 'My love,  
     my own.'

## XXXIX

BECAUSE thou hast the power and own'st  
     the grace  
 To look through and behind this mask  
     of me  
 (Against which years have beat thus  
     blanchingly  
 With their rains) and behold my soul's  
     true face,  
 The dim and weary witness of life's  
     race!—  
 Because thou hast the faith and love to see,  
 Through that same soul's distracting  
     lethargy,  
 The patient angel waiting for a place  
 In the new heavens! because nor sin  
     nor woe,  
 Nor God's infliction, nor death's neigh-  
     bourhood,  
 Nor all which others viewing, turn to  
     go, . . .  
 Nor all which makes me tired of all,  
     self-viewed, . . .  
 Nothing repels thee, . . . dearest, teach  
     me so  
 To pour out gratitude, as thou dost, good.

## XL

OH, yes! they love through all this world  
     of ours!  
 I will not gainsay love, called love for-  
     sooth.  
 I have heard love talked in my early youth,  
 And since, not so long back but that the  
     flowers  
 Then gathered, smell still. Mussulmans  
     and Giaours  
 Throw kerchiefs at a smile, and have no  
     ruth  
 For any weeping. Polypheme's white  
     tooth

Slips on the nut, if, after frequent showers,  
The shell is over-smooth,—and not so  
much

Will turn the thing called love, aside to  
hate,

Or else to oblivion. But thou art not such  
A lover, my Belovèd! thou canst wait  
Through sorrow and sickness, to bring  
souls to touch,  
And think it soon when others cry 'Too  
late.'

## XLI

I THANK all who have loved me in their  
hearts,  
With thanks and love from mine. Deep  
thanks to all

Who paused a little near the prison-wall,  
To hear my music in its louder parts,  
Ere they went onward, each one to the  
mart's

Or temple's occupation, beyond call.  
But thou, who, in my voice's sink and fall,  
When the sob took it, thy divinest Art's  
Own instrument didst drop down at thy  
foot,

To hearken what I said between my  
tears, . .

Instruct me how to thank thee!—Oh, to  
shoot

My soul's full meaning into future years,  
That *they* should lend it utterance, and  
salute

Love that endures, from Life that dis-  
appears!

## XLII

'My future will not copy fair my past'—  
I wrote that once; and thinking at my side  
My ministering life-angel justified  
The word by his appealing look upcast  
To the white throne of God, I turned at  
last,

And there, instead, saw thee, not un-  
allied

To angels in thy soul! Then I, long tried  
By natural ills, received the comfort fast,  
While budding, at thy sight, my pilgrim's  
staff

Gave out green leaves with morning  
dews imperaled.

I seek no copy now of life's first half:  
Leave here the pages with long musing  
curled,

And write me new my future's epigraph,  
New angel mine, unhopèd for in the  
world!

## XLIII

How do I love thee? Let me count the  
ways.

I love thee to the depth and breadth and  
height

My soul can reach, when feeling out of  
sight

For the ends of Being and ideal Grace.  
I love thee to the level of every day's  
Most quiet need, by sun and candlelight.

I love thee freely, as men strive for Right;  
I love thee purely, as they turn from

Praise.

I love thee with the passion put to use  
In my old griefs, and with my childhood's  
faith.

I love thee with a love I seemed to lose  
With my lost saints,—I love thee with  
the breath,

Smiles, tears, of all my life!—and, if God  
choose,

I shall but love thee better after death.

## XLIV

BELOVED, thou hast brought me many  
flowers

Plucked in the garden, all the summer  
through

And winter, and it seemed as if they grew  
In this close room, nor missed the sun  
and showers.

So, in the like name of that love of ours,  
Take back these thoughts which here—  
unfolded too,

And which on warm and cold days I  
withdrew

From my heart's ground. Indeed, those  
beds and bowers

Be overgrown with bitter weeds and rue,  
And wait thy weeding; yet here's

an eglantine,  
Here's ivy!—take them, as I used to do

Thy flowers, and keep them where they  
shall not pine.

Instruct thine eyes to keep their colours  
true,

And tell thy soul, their roots are left in  
mine.

## SONNETS

### THE SOUL'S EXPRESSION

With stammering lips and insufficient  
    sound  
I strive and struggle to deliver right  
That music of my nature, day and night  
With dream and thought and feeling  
    interwound,  
And inly answering all the senses round  
With octaves of a mystic depth and  
    height  
Which step out grandly to the infinite  
From the dark edges of the sensual  
    ground !  
This song of soul I struggle to outbear  
Through portals of the sense, sublime  
    and whole,  
And utter all myself into the air.  
But if I did it,—as the thunder-roll  
Breaks its own cloud, my flesh would  
    perish there,  
Before that dread apocalypse of soul.

### THE SERAPH AND POET

THE seraph sings before the manifest  
God-One, and in the burning of the  
    Seven,  
And with the full life of consummate  
    Heaven  
Heaving beneath him, like a mother's  
    breast  
Warm with her first-born's slumber in  
    that nest.  
The poet sings upon the earth grave-  
    riven,  
Before the naughty world, soon self-  
    forgiven  
Forwringing him,—and in the darkness  
    prest  
From his own soul by worldly weights.  
    Even so,  
Sing, seraph with the glory ! heaven is  
    high.  
Sing, poet with the sorrow ! earth is low.  
The universe's inward voices cry  
'Amen' to either song of joy and woe.  
Sing, seraph,—poet,—sing on equally !

### BEREAVEMENT

WHEN some Belovèds, 'neath whose  
    eyelids lay  
The sweet lights of my childhood, one  
    by one  
Did leave me dark before the natural sun,  
And I astonied fell and could not  
    pray,—  
A thought within me to myself did say,  
'Is God less God, that *thou* art left un-  
    done !  
Rise, worship, bless Him, in this sack-  
    cloth spun,  
As in that purple !'—But I answered,  
    Nay !  
What child his filial heart in words can  
    loose,  
If he behold his tender father raise  
The hand that chastens sorely ! can he  
    choose  
But sob in silence with an upward  
    gaze !—  
And my great Father, thinking fit to  
    bruise,  
Discerns in speechless tears both prayer  
    and praise.

### CONSOLATION

ALL are not taken ; there are left behind  
Living Belovèds, tender looks to bring,  
And make the daylight still a happy thing,  
And tender voices, to make soft the wind.  
But if it were not so—if I could find  
No love in all the world for comforting,  
Nor any path but hollowly did ring,  
Where 'dust to dust' the love from life  
    disjoined,  
And if, before those sepulchres unmoving,  
I stood alone (as some forsaken lamb  
Goes bleating up the moors in weary  
    dearth),  
Crying 'Where are ye, O my loved and  
    loving ?' . . .  
I know a voice would sound, 'Daughter,  
    I AM.  
Can I suffice for HEAVEN, and not for  
    earth ?'

TO MARY RUSSELL MITFORD  
IN HER GARDEN

WHAT time I lay these rimes anear thy  
feet,  
Benignant friend, I will not proudly say  
As better poets use, 'These *flowers* I lay,'  
Because I would not wrong thy roses  
sweet,  
Blaspheming so their name. And yet,  
repeat,  
Thou, overleaning them this springtime  
day,  
With heart as open to love as theirs to  
May,  
—'Low-rooted verse may reach some  
heavenly heat,  
Even like my blossoms, if as nature-true,  
Though not as precious.' Thou art un-  
perplexed,  
Dear friend, in whose dear writings  
drops the dew  
And blow the natural airs,—thou, who  
art next  
To nature's self in cheering the world's  
view,—  
To preach a sermon on so known a text!

ON A PORTRAIT OF WORDS-  
WORTH BY B. R. HAYDON

WORDSWORTH upon Helvellyn! Let the  
cloud  
Ebb audibly along the mountain-wind,  
Then break against the rock, and show  
behind  
The lowland valleys floating up to crowd  
The sense with beauty. He with fore-  
head bowed  
And humble-lidded eyes, as one inclined  
Before the sovran thought of his own  
mind  
And very meek with inspirations proud,  
Takes here his rightful place as poet-  
priest  
By the high altar, singing prayer and  
prayer  
To the higher Heavens. A noble vision  
free  
Our Haydon's hand has flung out from  
the mist!  
No portrait this, with Academic air!  
This is the poet and his poetry.

PAST AND FUTURE

My future will not copy fair my past  
On any leaf but Heaven's. Be fully  
done,  
Supernal Will! I would not fain be one  
Who, satisfying thirst and breaking fast  
Upon the fullness of the heart, at last  
Says no grace after meat. My wine has  
run  
Indeed out of my cup, and there is none  
To gather up the bread of my repast  
Scattered and trampled,—yet I find some  
good  
In earth's green herbs, and streams that  
bubble up  
Clear from the darkling ground,—con-  
tent until  
I sit with angels before better food.  
Dear Christ! when Thy new vintage fills  
my cup,  
This hand shall shake no more, nor that  
wine spill.

IRREPARABLENESS

I HAVE been in the meadows all the day  
And gathered there the nosegay that  
you see,  
Singing within myself as a bird or bee  
When such do field-work on a morn of  
May.  
But now I look upon my flowers, decay  
Has met them in my hands more fatally  
Because more warmly clasped,—and  
sobs are free  
To come instead of songs. What do  
you say,  
Sweet counsellors, dear friends? that I  
should go  
Back straightway to the fields, and  
gather more?  
Another, sooth, may do it,—but not I!  
My heart is very tired, my strength is  
low,  
My hands are full of blossoms plucked  
before,  
Held dead within them till myself shall  
die.

## TEARS

THANK God, bless God, all ye who  
 suffer not  
 More grief than ye can weep for. That  
 is well—  
 That is light grieving! lighter, none  
 befell  
 Since Adam forfeited the primal lot.  
 Tears! what are tears! The babe weeps  
 in its cot,  
 The mother singing,—at her marriage-  
 bell  
 The bride weeps,—and before the oracle  
 Of high-faned hills, the poet has forgot  
 Such moisture on his cheeks. Thank  
 God for grace.  
 Ye who weep only! If, as some have  
 done,  
 Ye grope tear-blinded in a desert place  
 And touch but tombs,—look up! those  
 tears will run  
 Soon in long rivers down the lifted  
 face.  
 And leave the vision clear for stars and  
 sun.

## GRIEF

I TELL you, hopeless grief is passion-  
 less;  
 That only men incredulous of despair,  
 Half-taught in anguish, through the  
 midnight air  
 Beat upward to God's throne in loud  
 access  
 Of shrieking and reproach. Full desert-  
 ness  
 In souls, as countries, lieth silent-bare  
 Under the blanching, vertical eye-glare  
 Of the absolute Heavens. Deep-hearted  
 man, express  
 Grief for thy Dead in silence like to  
 death:—  
 Most like a monumental statue set  
 In everlasting watch and moveless woe,  
 Till itself crumble to the dust beneath.  
 Touch it: the marble eyelids are not  
 wet;  
 If it could weep, it could arise and go.

## SUBSTITUTION

WHEN some beloved voice that was to you  
 Both sound and sweetness, faileth sud-  
 denly,  
 And silence, against which you dare not  
 cry,  
 Aches round you like a strong disease  
 and new—  
 What hope! what help! what music  
 will undo  
 That silence to your sense? Not friend-  
 ship's sigh.  
 Not reason's subtle count. Not melody  
 Of viol's, nor of pipes that Faunus blew.  
 Not songs of poets, nor of nightingales,  
 Whose hearts leap upward through the  
 cypress trees  
 To the clear moon! nor yet the spheric  
 laws  
 Self-chanted,—nor the angels' sweet  
 All hails,  
 Met in the smile of God. Nay, none of  
 these.  
 Speak THOU, availing Christ!—and fill  
 this pause.

## COMFORT

SPEAK low to me, my Saviour, low and  
 sweet  
 From out the hallelujahs, sweet and low,  
 Lest I should fear and fall, and miss  
 Thee so  
 Who art not missed by any that entreat.  
 Speak to me as to Mary at Thy feet!  
 And if no precious gums my hands  
 bestow,  
 Let my tears drop like amber, while  
 I go  
 In reach of Thy divinest voice complete  
 In humanest affection—thus, in sooth,  
 To lose the sense of losing. As a child,  
 Whose song-bird seeks the wood for  
 evermore,  
 Is sung to in its stead by mother's  
 mouth,  
 Till, sinking on her breast, love-recon-  
 ciled,  
 He sleeps the faster that he wept before.

## PERPLEXED MUSIC

AFFECTIONATELY INSCRIBED TO E. J.

EXPERIENCE, like a pale musician, holds  
 A dulcimer of patience in his hand,  
 Whence harmonies we cannot under-  
 stand,  
 Of God's will in His worlds, the strain  
 unfolds  
 In sad, perplexed minors. Deathly colds  
 Fall on us while we hear and counter-  
 mand  
 Our sanguine heart back from the fancy-  
 land  
 With nightingales in visionary wolds.  
 We murmur,—‘Where is any certain  
 tune  
 Or measured music, in such notes as  
 these?’—  
 But angels, leaning from the golden seat,  
 Are not so minded; their fine ear hath  
 won  
 The issue of completed cadences,  
 And, smiling down the stars, they  
 whisper—SWEET.

## WORK

WHAT are we set on earth for! Say, to  
 toil;  
 Nor seek to leave thy tending of the vines,  
 For all the heat o’ the day, till it declines,  
 And Death’s mild curfew shall from  
 work assail.  
 Goddild anoint thee with His odorous oil,  
 To wrestle, not to reign; and He assigns  
 All thy tears over, like pure crystallines  
 For younger fellow workers of the soil  
 To wear for amulets. So others shall  
 Take patience, labour, to their heart  
 and hand,  
 From thy hand, and thy heart, and thy  
 brave cheer,  
 And God’s grace fructify through thee  
 to all.  
 The least flower, with a brimming cup,  
 may stand,  
 And share its dewdrop with another  
 near.

## FUTURITY

AND, O beloved voices, upon which  
 Ours passionately call, because ere long  
 Ye brake off in the middle of that song  
 We sang together softly, to enrich  
 The poor world with the sense of love,  
 and witch  
 The heart out of things evil,—I am  
 strong,  
 Knowing ye are not lost for ay among  
 The hills, with last year’s thrush. God  
 keeps a niche  
 In Heaven, to hold our idols: and albeit  
 He brake them to our faces, and denied  
 That our close kisses should impair their  
 white,—  
 I know we shall behold them raised,  
 complete,  
 The dust swept from their beauty,—  
 glorified  
 New Memnons singing in the great  
 God-light.

## THE TWO SAYINGS

Two sayings of the Holy Scriptures beat  
 Like pulses in the Church’s brow and  
 breast!  
 And by them we find rest in our unrest,  
 And, heart-deep in salt tears, do yet  
 entreat  
 God’s fellowship, as if on heavenly seat.  
 The first is JESUS WEPT,—whereon is  
 prest  
 Full many a sobbing face that drops its  
 best  
 And sweetest waters on the record  
 sweet.  
 And one is, where the Christ, denied  
 and scorned,  
 LOOKED UPON PETER. Oh, to render  
 plain,  
 By help of having loved a little and  
 mourned,  
 That look of sovran love and sovran  
 pain  
 Which HE, who could not sin yet  
 suffered, turned  
 On him who could reject but not sustain!

## THE LOOK

THE Saviour looked on Peter. Aye, no word,  
 No gesture of reproach! the Heavens serene,  
 Though heavy with armed justice, did not lean  
 Their thunders that way! the forsaken Lord  
*Looked* only, on the traitor. None record  
 What that look was, none guess; for those who have seen  
 Wronged lovers loving through a death-pang keen,  
 Or pale-cheeked martyrs smiling to a sword,  
 Have missed Jehovah at the judgement-call.  
 And Peter, from the height of blasphemy—  
 'I never knew this man'—did quail and fall,  
 As knowing straight THAT GOD,—and turned free  
 And went out speechless from the face of all,  
 And filled the silence, weeping bitterly.

## THE MEANING OF THE LOOK

I THINK that look of Christ might seem to say—  
 'Thou Peter! art thou then a common stone  
 Which I at last must break My heart upon,  
 For all God's charge to His high angels may  
 Guard My foot better! Did I yesterday  
 Wash *thy* feet, My beloved, that they should run  
 Quick to deny Me 'neath the morning sun?  
 And do thy kisses, like the rest, betray?  
 The cock crows coldly.—Go, and manifest  
 A late contrition, but no bootless fear!  
 For when thy final need is dreariest,  
 Thou shalt not be denied, as I am here—  
 My voice, to God and angels, shall attest,  
*Because I know this man, let him be clear.*

## A THOUGHT FOR A LONELY DEATH-BED

INSCRIBED TO MY FRIEND E. C.

If God compel thee to this destiny,  
 To die alone,—with none beside thy bed  
 To ruffle round with sobs thy last word said,  
 And mark with tears the pulses ebb from thee,—  
 Pray then alone—'O Christ, come tenderly!  
 By Thy forsaken Sonship in the red  
 Drear wine-press,—by the wilderness outspread,—  
 And the lone garden where Thine agony  
 Fell bloody from Thy brow,—by all of those  
 Permitted desolations, comfort mine!  
 No earthly friend being near me, interpose  
 No deathly angel 'twixt my face and Thine,  
 But stoop Thyself to gather my life's rose,  
 And smile away my mortal to Divine.'

## WORK AND CONTEMPLATION

THE woman singeth at her spinning-wheel  
 A pleasant chant, ballad, or barcarole:  
 She thinketh of her song, upon the whole,  
 Far more than of her flax; and yet the reel  
 Is full, and artfully her fingers feel  
 With quick adjustment, provident control,  
 The lines, too subtly twisted to unroll,  
 Out to a perfect thread. I hence appeal  
 To the dear Christian Church—that we may do  
 Our Father's business in these temples mirk,  
 Thus swift and steadfast,—thus, intent and strong;  
 While, thus, apart from toil, our souls pursue  
 Some high, calm, spheric tune, and prove our work  
 The better for the sweetness of our song.

## PAIN IN PLEASURE

A THOUGHT lay like a flower upon mine  
heart,  
And drew around it other thoughts like  
bees  
For multitude and thirst of sweet-  
nesses,—  
Whereat rejoicing, I desired the art  
Of the Greek whistler, who to wharf  
and mart  
Could lure those insect swarms from  
orange-trees,  
That I might hive with me such thoughts,  
and please  
My soul so, always. Foolish counterpart  
Of a weak man's vain wishes! While I  
spoke,  
The thought I called a flower, grew  
nettle-rough—  
The thoughts, called bees, stung me to  
festering.  
Oh, entertain (cried Reason, as she  
woke)  
Your best and gladdest thoughts but long  
enough,  
And they will all prove sad enough to  
sting.

## FLUSH OR FAUNUS

You see this dog. It was but yesterday  
I mused forgetful of his presence here  
Till thought on thought drew downward  
tear on tear,  
When from the pillow, where wet-  
cheeked I lay,  
A head as hairy as Faunus, thrust its way  
Right sudden against my face,—two  
golden-clear  
Great eyes astonished mine,—a drooping  
ear  
Did flap me on either cheek to dry the  
spray!  
I started first, as some Arcadian,  
Amazed by goatly god in twilight grove;  
But, as the bearded vision closelier ran  
My tears off, I knew Flush, and rose  
above  
Surprise and sadness,—thanking the true  
PAN,  
Who, by low creatures, leads to heights  
of love.

## FINITE AND INFINITE

THE wind sounds only in opposing  
straights,  
The sea, beside the shore; man's spirit  
reads  
Its quiet only up against the ends  
Of wants and oppositions, loves and  
hates,  
Where, worked and worn by passionate  
debates,  
And losing by the loss it apprehends.  
The flesh rocks round, and every breath  
it sends  
Is ravelled to a sigh. All tortured states  
Suppose a straitened place. Jehovah  
Lord,  
Make room for rest, around me! out of  
sight  
Now float me, of the vexing land ab-  
horred,  
Till in deep calms of space my soul may  
right  
Her nature,—shoot large sail on length-  
ening cord,  
And rush exultant on the Infinite.

## AN APPREHENSION

If all the gentlest-hearted friends I know  
Concentred in one heart their gentle-  
ness,  
That still grew gentler, till its pulse was  
less  
For life than pity,—I should yet be slow  
To bring my own heart nakedly below  
The palm of such a friend, that he should  
press  
Motive, condition, means, appliances,  
My false ideal joy and fickle woe,  
Out full to light and knowledge; I should  
fear  
Some plait between the brows—some  
rougher chime  
In the free voice . . . O angels, let your  
flood  
Of bitter scorn dash on me! do ye hear  
What I say, who bear calmly all the time  
This everlasting face to face with God?

## DISCONTENT

LIGHT human nature is too lightly tost  
 And ruffled without cause,—complaining  
 on,  
 Restless with rest—until, being over-  
 thrown,  
 It learneth to lie quiet. Let a frost  
 Or a small wasp have crept to the inner-  
 most  
 Of our ripe peach, or let the wilful sun  
 Shine westward of our window,—straight  
 we run  
 A furlong's sigh, as if the world were lost.  
 But what time through the heart and  
 through the brain  
 God hath transfixed us,—we, so moved  
 before,  
 Attain to a calm. Aye, shouldering  
 weights of pain,  
 We anchor in deep waters, safe from  
 shore,  
 And hear, submissive, o'er the stormy  
 main,  
 God's chartered judgements walk for  
 evermore.

## PATIENCE TAUGHT BY NATURE

'O dreary life,' we cry. 'O dreary life!'  
 And still the generations of the birds  
 Sing through our sighing, and the flocks  
 and herds  
 Serenely live while we are keeping strife  
 With Heaven's true purpose in us, as  
 a knife  
 Against which we may struggle! ocean  
 girds  
 Unslackened the dry land, savannah-  
 swards  
 Unweary sweep,—hills watch, unworn;  
 and rife  
 Meek leaves drop yearly from the forest-  
 trees,  
 To show above the unwasted stars that  
 pass  
 In their old glory. O thou God of old,  
 Grant me some smaller grace than comes  
 to these!—  
 But so much patience as a blade of grass  
 Grows by, contented through the heat  
 and cold.

CHEERFULNESS TAUGHT BY  
REASON

I THINK we are too ready with complaint  
 In this fair world of God's. Had we no  
 hope  
 Indeed beyond the zenith and the slope  
 Of yon grey blank of sky, we might  
 grow faint  
 To muse upon eternity's constraint  
 Round our aspirant souls; but since  
 the scope  
 Must widen early is it well to droop,  
 For a few days consumed in loss and  
 taint!  
 O pusillanimous Heart, be comforted,—  
 And, like a cheerful traveller, take the  
 road,  
 Singing beside the hedge. What if the  
 bread  
 Be bitter in thine inn, and thou unshod  
 To meet the flints!—At least it may be  
 said,  
 'Because the way is *short*, I thank Thee,  
 God!'

## EXAGGERATION

WE overstate the ills of life, and take  
 Imagination (given us to bring down  
 The choirs of singing angels overshone  
 By God's clear glory) down our earth  
 to rake  
 The dismal snows instead,—flake follow-  
 ing flake,  
 To cover all the corn. We walk upon  
 The shadow of hills across a level  
 thrown,  
 And pant like climbers. Near the alder-  
 brake  
 We sigh so loud, the nightingale within  
 Refuses to sing loud, as else she would.  
 O brothers! let us leave the shame and  
 sin  
 Of taking vainly, in a plaintive mood,  
 The holy name of GRIEF!—holy herein,  
 That by the grief of ONE came all our  
 good.

## ADEQUACY

Now by the verdure on thy thousand hills,  
Belovéd England,—doth the earth appear

Quite good enough for men to overbear  
The will of God in, with rebellious  
wills!

We cannot say the morning-sun fulfils  
Ingloriously its course, nor that the clear  
Strong stars without significance in-  
sphere

Our habitation. We, meantime, our ills  
Heap up against this good, and lift a cry  
Against this work-day world, this ill-  
spread feast,

As if ourselves were better certainly  
Than what we come to. Maker and  
High Priest,

I ask Thee not my joys to multiply,—  
Only to make me worthier of the least.

## TO GEORGE SAND

## A DESIRE

THOU large-brained woman and large-  
hearted man,

Self-called George Sand! whose soul,  
amid the lions

Of thy tumultuous senses, moans defiance,  
And answers roar for roar, as spirits can!  
I would some mild miraculous thunder ran  
Above the applauded circus, in appliance  
Of thine own nobler nature's strength  
and science,

Drawing two pinions, white as wings  
of swan,

From thy strong shoulders, to amaze the  
place

With holier light! that thou to woman's  
claim,

And man's, mightst join beside the  
angel's grace

Of a pure genius sanctified from blame,—  
Till child and maiden pressed to thine  
embrace,

To kiss upon thy lips a stainless fame.

## TO GEORGE SAND

## A RECOGNITION

TRUE genius, but true woman! dost deny  
Thy woman's nature with a manly scorn,  
And break away the gauds and armlets  
worn

By weaker women in captivity!  
Ah, vain denial! that revolted cry  
Is sobbed in by a woman's voice for-  
lorn!—

Thy woman's hair, my sister, all unshorn,  
Floats back dishevelled strength in agony,  
Disproving thy man's name! and while  
before

The world thou burnest in a poet-fire,  
We see thy woman-heart beat evermore  
Through the large flame. Beat purer,  
heart, and higher,

Till God unsex thee on the heavenly  
shore,

Where unincarnate spirits purely aspire.

## THE PRISONER

I COUNT the dismal time by months and  
years,

Since last I felt the green sward under  
foot,

And the great breath of all things  
summer-mute

Met mine upon my lips. Now earth  
appears

As strange to me as dreams of distant  
spheres,

Or thoughts of Heaven we weep at  
Nature's lute

Sounds on behind this door so closely shut,  
A strange, wild music to the prisoner's  
ears,

Dilated by the distance, till the brain  
Grows dim with fancies which it feels  
too fine,

While ever, with a visionary pain,  
Past the precluded senses, sweep and  
shine

Streams, forests, glades,—and many a  
golden train

Of sunlit hills, transfigured to Divine.

## INSUFFICIENCY

WHEN I attain to utter forth in verse  
 Some inward thought, my soul throbs  
 audibly  
 Along my pulses, yearning to be free  
 And something farther, fuller, higher,  
 rehearse.  
 To the individual, true, and the universe,  
 In consummation of right harmony.  
 But, like a wind-exposed, distorted tree.  
 We are blown against for ever by the curse  
 Which breathes through nature. Oh, the  
 world is weak—  
 The effluence of each is false to all,  
 And what we best conceive, we fail to  
 speak.  
 Wait, soul, until thine ashen garments  
 fall,  
 And then resume thy broken strains, and  
 seek  
 Fit peroration without let or thrall.

## TWO SKETCHES

## I. H. B.

THE shadow of her face upon the wall  
 May take your memory to the perfect  
 Greek.  
 But when you front her, you would call  
 the cheek  
 Too full, sir, for your models, if withal  
 That bloom it wears could leave you  
 critical,  
 And that smile reaching toward the rosy  
 streak;  
 For one who smiles so, has no need to  
 speak  
 To lead your thoughts along, as steed to  
 stall.  
 A smile that turns the sunny side o' the  
 heart  
 On all the world, as if herself did win  
 By what she lavished on an open mart!  
 Let no man call the liberal sweetness,  
 sin.—  
 For friends may whisper, as they stand  
 apart,  
 'Methinks there's still some warmer  
 place within.'

## II. A. B.

HER azure eyes, dark lashes hold in tee;  
 Her fair superfluous ringlets, without  
 check,  
 Drop after one another down her neck,  
 As many to each cheek as you might see  
 Green leaves to a wild rose! this sign  
 outwardly,  
 And a like woman-covering seems to  
 deck  
 Her inner nature. For she will not fleck  
 World's sunshine with a finger. Sym-  
 pathy  
 Must call her in Love's name! and then,  
 I know,  
 She rises up, and brightens as she  
 should,  
 And lights her smile for comfort, and is  
 slow  
 In nothing of high-hearted fortitude.  
 To smell this flower, come near it! such  
 can grow  
 In that sole garden where Christ's brow  
 dropped blood.

## MOUNTAINEER AND POET

THE simple goatherd, between Alp and  
 sky,  
 Seeing his shadow, in that awful tryst,  
 Dilated to a giant's on the mist,  
 Esteems not his own stature larger by  
 The apparent image, but more patiently  
 Strikes his staff down beneath his clen-  
 ing fist,  
 While the snow-mountains lift their  
 amethyst  
 And sapphire crowns of splendour, far  
 and nigh,  
 Into the air around him. Learn from  
 hence  
 Meek morals, all ye poets that pursue  
 Your way still onward up to eminence!  
 Ye are not great because creation drew  
 Large revelations round your earliest  
 sense,  
 Nor bright because God's glory shines  
 for you.

## THE POET

THE poet hath the child's sight in his  
breast,  
And sees all *new*. What oftenest he has  
viewed,  
He views with the first glory. Fair and  
good  
Fall never on him, at the fairest, best,  
But stand before him holy and undressed  
In week-day false conventions, such as  
would  
Drag other men down from the altitude  
Of primal types, too early dispossessed.  
Why, God would tire of all His heavens,  
as soon  
As thou, O godlike, childlike poet, didst,  
Of day and nightly sights of sun and  
moon!  
And therefore hath He set thee in the  
midst,  
Where men may hear thy wonder's  
ceaseless tune.  
And praise His world for ever, as thou  
bidst.

## HIRAM POWERS' GREEK SLAVE

THEY say Ideal beauty cannot enter  
The house of anguish. On the threshold  
stands  
An alien Image with ensnaked hands,  
Called the Greek Slave! as if the artist  
meant her  
(That passionless perfection which he  
lent her,  
Shadowed not darkened where the sill  
expands)  
To, so, confront man's crimes in different  
lands  
With man's ideal sense. Pierce to the  
centre,  
Art's fiery finger!—and breakup ere long  
The serfdom of this world! appeal, fair  
stone,  
From God's pure heights of beauty  
against man's wrong!  
Catch up in thy divine face, not alone  
East griefs but west,—and strike and  
shame the strong,  
By thunders of white silence, over-  
thrown.

## LIFE

EACH creature holds an insular point in  
space;  
Yet what man stirs a finger, breathes  
a sound,  
But all the multitudinous beings round  
In all the countless worlds, with time  
and place  
For their conditions, down to the central  
base,  
Thrill, haply, in vibration and rebound,  
Life answering life across the vast  
profound,  
In full antiphony, by a common grace!  
I think, this sudden joyaunce which  
illumes  
A child's mouth sleeping, unaware may  
run  
From some soul newly loosened from  
earth's tombs.  
I think, this passionate sigh, which  
half-begun  
I stifle back, may reach and stir the  
plumes  
Of God's calm angel standing in the sun.

## LOVE

WE cannot live, except thus mutually  
We alternate, aware or unaware,  
The reflex act of life; and when we bear  
Our virtue outward most impulsively,  
Most full of invocation, and to be  
Most instantly compellant, certes, there  
We live most life, whoever breathes  
most air,  
And counts his dying years by sun and  
sea.  
But when a soul, by choice and con-  
science, doth  
Throw out her full force on another soul,  
The conscience and the concentration  
both  
Make mere life, Love. For Life in  
perfect whole  
And aim consummated, is Love in sooth,  
As nature's magnet-heat rounds pole  
with pole.

## HEAVEN AND EARTH

And there was silence in heaven about the space of half an hour.—*Revelation* viii. 1.

God, who, with thunders and great voices kept  
Beneath Thy throne, and stars most silver-paced  
Along the inferior gyres, and open-faced  
Melodious angels round,—canst intercept  
Music with music,—yet, at will, hast swept  
All back, all back (said he in Patmos placed),  
To fill the heavens with silence of the waste  
Which lasted half an hour!—lo, I who have wept  
All day and night, beseech Thee by my tears,  
And by that dread response of curse and groan  
Men alternate across these hemispheres,  
Vouchsafe us such a half-hour's hush alone,  
In compensation for our stormy years!  
As heaven has paused from song, let earth, from moan.

## THE PROSPECT

METHINKS we do as fretful children do,  
Leaning their faces on the window-pane  
To sigh the glass dim with their own breath's stain,  
And shut the sky and landscape from their view.  
And thus, alas! since God the maker drew  
A mystic separation 'twixt those twain,  
The life beyond us, and our souls in pain,  
We miss the prospect which we are called unto  
By grief we are fools to use. Be still and strong,  
O man, my brother! hold thy sobbing breath,  
And keep thy soul's large window pure from wrong,—  
That so, as life's appointment issueth,  
Thy vision may be clear to watch along  
The sunset consummation-lights of death.

HUGH STUART BOYD<sup>1</sup>

## HIS BLINDNESS

God would not let the spheric Lights accost  
This God-loved man, and bade the earth stand off  
With all her beckoning hills, whose golden stuff  
Under the feet of the royal sun is crossed.  
Yet such things were to him not wholly lost,—  
Permitted, with his wandering eyes light-proof,  
To catch fair visions, rendered full enough  
By many a ministrant accomplished ghost,—  
Still seeing, to sounds of softly-turned book-leaves.  
Sappho's crown-rose, and Meleager's spring,  
And Gregory's starlight on Greek-burnished eyes!  
Till Sensuous and Unsensuous seemed one thing,  
Viewed from one level,—earth's reapers at the sheaves  
Scarce plainer than Heaven's angels on the wing!

## HUGH STUART BOYD

## HIS DEATH, 1848

BELOVED friend, who living many years  
With sightless eyes raised vainly to the sun,  
Didst learn to keep thy patient soul in tune  
To visible nature's elemental cheers!  
God has not caught thee to new hemispheres  
Because thou wast weary of this one;—  
I think thine angel's patience first was done,

<sup>1</sup> To whom was inscribed, in grateful affection, my poem of 'Cyprus Wine.' There comes a moment in life when even gratitude and affection turn to pain, as they do now with me. This excellent and learned man, enthusiastic for the good and the beautiful, and one of the most simple and upright of human beings, passed out of his long darkness through death in the summer of 1848. Dr. Adam Clarke's daughter and biographer, Mrs. Smith (happier, in this than the absent), fulfilling a doubly filial duty as she sat by the death-bed of her father's friend and hers.

And that he spake out with celestial tears,  
 'Is it enough, dear God? then lighten so  
 This soul that smiles in darkness!'

Steadfast friend,  
 Who never didst my heart or life mis-  
 know,  
 Nor either's faults too keenly appre-  
 hend,—  
 How can I wonder when I see thee go  
 To join the Dead found faithful to the end?

### HUGH STUART BOYD

#### LEGACIES

THREE gifts the Dying left me,—  
 Aeschylus,  
 And Gregory Nazianzen, and a clock,  
 Chiming the gradual hours out like a flock

Of stars whose motion is melodious.  
 The books were those I used to read from,  
 thus

Assisting my dear teacher's soul to un-  
 lock

The darkness of his eyes. Now, mine  
 they mock,

Blinded in turn, by tears! now, mur-  
 murous

Sad echoes of my young voice, years  
 ago

Intoning from these leaves the Grecian  
 phrase,

Return and choke my utterance. Books,  
 lie down

In silence on the shelf there, within gaze;  
 And thou, clock, striking the hour's  
 pulses on,

Chime in the day which ends these  
 parting days!

# CASA GUIDI WINDOWS

A POEM, IN TWO PARTS

## ADVERTISEMENT TO THE FIRST EDITION

THIS poem contains the impressions of the writer upon events in Tuscany of which she was a witness. 'From a window,' the critic may demur. She bows to the objection in the very title of her work. No continuous narrative nor exposition of political philosophy is attempted by her. It is a simple story of personal impressions, whose only value is in the intensity with which they were received, as proving her warm affection for a beautiful and unfortunate country, and the sincerity with which they are related, as indicating her own good faith and freedom from partisanship.

Of the two parts of this poem, the first was written nearly three years ago, while the second resumes the actual situation of 1851. The discrepancy between the two parts is a sufficient guarantee to the public of the truthfulness of the writer, who,

though she certainly escaped the epidemic 'falling sickness' of enthusiasm for Pio Nono, takes shame upon herself that she believed, like a woman, some royal oaths, and lost sight of the probable consequences of some obvious popular defects. If the discrepancy should be painful to the reader, let him understand that to the writer it has been more so. But such discrepancies we are called upon to accept at every hour by the conditions of our nature, implying the interval between aspiration and performance, between faith and dis-illusion, between hope and fact.

O trusted broken prophecy,  
O richest fortune sourly crost,  
Born for the future, to the future lost!

Nay, not lost to the future in this case.  
The future of Italy shall not be disinherited.

FLORENCE, 1851.

## CASA GUIDI WINDOWS

### PART I

I HEARD last night a little child go singing  
'Neath Casa Guidi windows, by the  
church,  
*O bella libertà, O bella!* stringing  
The same words still on notes he went  
in search  
So high for, you concluded the upspring-  
ing  
Of such a nimble bird to sky from perch  
Must leave the whole bush in a tremble  
green,  
And that the heart of Italy must beat,  
While such a voice had leave to rise  
serene

'Twixt church and palace of a Florence  
street!  
A little child, too, who not long had been  
By mother's finger steadied on his  
feet,  
And still *O bella libertà* he sang.  
Then I thought, musing, of the innume-  
rous  
Sweet songs which still for Italy out-  
rang  
From older singers' lips, who sang not  
thus  
Exultingly and purely, yet, with pang  
Fast sheathed in music, touched the heart  
of us

So finely, that the pity scarcely pained.  
 I thought how Filicaja led on others,  
 Bewailers for their Italy enchained,  
 And how they called her childless among  
     mothers,  
     Widow of empires, aye, and scarce  
     refrained  
 Cursing her beauty to her face, as  
     brothers  
     Might a shamed sister's,—‘Had she  
     been less fair  
 She were less wretched,’—how, evoking  
     so  
     From congregated wrong and heaped  
     despair  
 Of men and women writhing under  
     blow,  
     Harrowed and hideous in a filthy lair,  
 Some personating Image, wherein woe  
     Was wrapt in beauty from offending  
     much,  
 They called it Cybele, or Niobe,  
     Or laid it corpse-like on a bier for such,  
 Where all the world might drop for  
     Italy  
     Those cadenced tears which burn not  
     where they touch,—  
 ‘Juliet of nations, canst thou die as we?  
     And was the violet crown that crowned  
     thy head  
 So over-large, though new buds made it  
     rough,  
     It slipped down and across thine eye-  
     lids dead,  
 O sweet, fair Juliet!’ Of such songs  
     enough,  
     Too many of such complaints! behold,  
     instead,  
 Void at Verona, Juliet's marble trough<sup>1</sup>.  
     As void as that is, are all images  
 Men set between themselves and actual  
     wrong,  
     To catch the weight of pity, meet the  
     stress  
 Of conscience,—since 'tis easier to gaze  
     long  
     On mournful masks, and sad effigies,  
 Than on real, live, weak creatures  
     crushed by strong.

For me who stand in Italy to-day

<sup>1</sup> They show at Verona, as the tomb of Juliet, an empty trough of stone.

Where worthier poets stood and sang  
     before,  
     I kiss their footsteps, yet their words  
     gainsay.  
 I can but muse in hope upon this shore  
     Of golden Arno as it shoots away  
 Through Florence' heart beneath her  
     bridges four!  
     Bent bridges, seeming to strain off like  
     bows,  
 And tremble while the arrowy undertide  
     Shoots on and cleaves the marble as it  
     goes,  
 And strikes up palace-walls on either  
     side,  
     And froths the cornice out in glittering  
     rows,  
 With doors and windows quaintly multi-  
     plied,  
     And terrace-sweeps, and gazers upon  
     all,  
 By whom if flower or kerchief were  
     thrown out  
     From any lattice there, the same would  
     fall  
 Into the river underneath no doubt,  
     It runs so close and fast 'twixt wall  
     and wall.  
 How beautiful! the mountains from with-  
     out  
     In silence listen for the word said next.  
 What word will men say,—here where  
     Giotto planted  
     His campanile, like an unperplexed  
 Fine question Heaven-ward, touching  
     the things granted  
     A noble people who, being greatly  
     vexed  
 In act, in aspiration keep undaunted?  
     What word will God say? Michel's  
     Night and Day  
 And Dawn and Twilight wait in marble  
     scorn<sup>2</sup>,  
     Like dogs upon a dunghill, couched on  
     clay  
 From whence the Medicean stamp's out-  
     worn,  
     The final putting off of all such sway

<sup>2</sup> These famous statues recline in the Sagrestia Nuova, on the tombs of Giuliano de' Medici, third son of Lorenzo the Magnificent, and Lorenzo of Urbino, his grandson. Strozzi's epigram on the Night, with Michel Angelo's rejoinder, is well known.

By all such hands, and freeing of the  
unborn

In Florence and the great world out-  
side Florence.

Three hundred years his patient statues  
wait

In that small chapel of the dim St.  
Lawrence.

Day's eyes are breaking bold and passion-  
ate

Over his shoulder, and will flash abhor-  
rence

On darkness and with level looks meet  
fate,

When once loose from that marble  
film of theirs ;

The Night has wild dreams in her sleep,  
the Dawn

Is haggard as the sleepless, Twilight  
wears

A sort of horror ; as the veil withdrawn  
'Twixt the artist's soul and works had

left them heirs

Of speechless thoughts which would not  
quail nor fawn,

Of angers and contempt, of hope and  
love ;

For not without a meaning did he place  
The princely Urbino on the seat above

With everlasting shadow on his face,  
While the slow dawns and twilights

disapprove

The ashes of his long-extinguished race,  
Which never more shall clog the feet

of men.

I do believe, divinest Angelo,  
That winter-hour, in Via Larga, when

They bade thee build a statue up in snow<sup>1</sup>,  
And straight that marvel of thine art

again

Dissolved beneath the sun's Italian glow,  
Thine eyes, dilated with the plastic

passion,

Thawing too, in drops of wounded man-  
hood, since,

To mock alike thine art and indig-  
nation,

Laughed at the palace-window the new  
prince,—

('Aha! this genius needs for exalta-  
tion,

<sup>1</sup> This mocking task was set by Pietro, the  
unworthy successor of Lorenzo the Magnificent.

When all's said, and howe'er the proud  
may wince,

A little marble from our princely  
mines!')

I do believe that hour thou laughedst too,  
For the whole sad world and for thy

Florentines,

After those few tears—which were only  
few!

That as, beneath the sun, the grand  
white lines

Of thy snow-statue trembled and with-  
drew,—

The head, erect as Jove's, being  
palsied first,

The eyelids flattened, the full brow  
turned blank,—

The right hand, raised but now as if  
it cursed,

Dropt, a mere snowball (till the people  
sank

Their voices, though a louder laughter  
burst

From the royal window), thou couldst  
proudly thank

God and the prince for promise and  
presage,

And laugh the laugh back, I think verily,  
Thine eyes being purged by tears of

righteous rage

To read a wrong into a prophecy,  
And measure a true great man's

heritage

Against a mere great duke's posterity.  
I think thy soul said then, 'I do not need

A principedom and its quarries, after all;  
For if I write, paint, carve a word,

indeed,

On book or board or dust, on floor or  
wall,

The same is kept of God, who taketh  
heed

That not a letter of the meaning fall  
Or ere it touch and teach His world's

deep heart,

Outlasting, therefore, all your lordships,  
sir!

So keep your stone, beseech you, for  
your part,

To cover up your grave-place and refer  
The proper titles ; I live by my art.

The thought I threw into this snow  
shall stir

This gazing people when their gaze  
is done ;  
And the tradition of your act and mine,  
When all the snow is melted in the sun,  
Shall gather up, for unborn men, a sign  
Of what is the true principedom,—aye,  
and none  
Shall laugh that day, except the drunk  
with wine.'

Amen, great Angelo ! the day's at hand.  
If many laugh not on it, shall we weep ?  
Much more we must not, let us  
understand.

Through rimers sonnetting in their  
sleep,  
And archaists mumbling dry bones up  
the land,  
And sketchers lauding ruined towns  
a-heap,—

Through all that drowsy hum of voices  
smooth,  
The hopeful bird mounts carolling from  
brake,

The hopeful child, with leaps to catch  
his growth,  
Sings open-eyed for liberty's sweetsake !  
And I, a singer also, from my youth,  
Prefer to sing with these who are awake,  
With birds, with babes, with men  
who will not fear

The baptism of the holy morning dew  
(And many of such wakers now are  
here,

Complete in their anointed manhood, who  
Will greatly dare and greatlier perse-  
vere),

Than join those old thin voices with my  
new,

And sigh for Italy with some safe sigh  
Cooped up in music 'twixt an oh and ah,—  
Nay, hand in hand with that young  
child, will I

Go singing rather, '*Bella libertà*,  
Than, with those poets, croon the  
dead or cry

'*Se tu men bella fossi, Italia !*'

'Less wretched if less fair.' Perhaps  
a truth

Is so far plain in this—that Italy,  
Long trammelled with the purple of  
her youth

Against her age's ripe activity,  
Sits still upon her tombs, without  
death's ruth,

But also without life's brave energy.  
'Now tell us what is Italy?' men  
ask :

And others answer, 'Virgil, Cicero,  
Catullus, Caesar.' What beside ! to  
task

The memory closer—'Why, Boccaccio,  
Dante, Petrarca,'—and if still the  
flask

Appears to yield its wine by drops too  
slow,—

'Angelo, Raffaello, Pergolesi,'—all  
Whose strong hearts beat through stone,  
or charged again

The paints with fire of souls electrical,  
Or broke up heaven for music. What  
more then ?

Why, then, no more. The chaplet's  
last beads fall

In naming the last saintship within ken,  
And, after that, none prayeth in the  
land.

Alas, this Italy has too long swept  
Heroic ashes up for hour-glass sand ;  
Of her own past, impassioned nympho-  
lept !

Consenting to be nailed here by the  
hand

To the very bay-tree under which she  
stepped

A queen of old, and plucked a leafy  
branch.

And, licensing the world too long indeed  
To use her broad phylacteries to  
staunch

And stop her bloody lips, she takes no  
heed

How one clear word would draw an  
avalanche

Of living sons around her, to succeed  
The vanished generations. Can she  
count

These oil-eaters, with large, live, mobile  
mouths

Agape for macaroni, in the amount  
Of consecrated heroes of her south's

Bright rosary ? The pitcher at the  
fount,

The gift of gods, being broken, she  
much loathes

To let the ground-leaves of the place  
confer  
A natural bowl. So henceforth she  
would seem  
No nation, but the poet's pensioner,  
With alms from every land of song and  
dream,  
While ay her pipers sadly pipe of  
her,  
Until their proper breaths, in that  
extreme  
Of sighing, split the reed on which  
they played!  
Of which, no more. But never say 'no  
more'  
To Italy's life! Her memories undis-  
mayed  
Still argue 'evermore,'—her graves  
implore  
Her future to be strong and not  
afraid;  
Her very statues send their looks before.

We do not serve the dead—the past  
is past!  
God lives, and lifts His glorious mornings  
up  
Before the eyes of men, awake at last,  
Who put away the meats they used to  
sup,  
And down upon the dust of earth  
outcast  
The dregs remaining of the ancient cup.  
Then turn to wakeful prayer and  
worthy act.  
The dead, upon their awful 'vantage  
ground,  
The sun not in their faces,—shall  
abstract  
No more our strength: we will not be  
discrowned  
As guardians of their crowns; nor  
deign transact  
A barter of the present, for a sound  
Of good, so counted in the foregone  
days.  
O Dead, ye shall no longer cling to us  
With rigid hands of desiccating praise,  
And drag us backward by the garment  
thus,  
To stand and laud you in long-drawn  
virelays!  
We will not henceforth be oblivious

Of our own lives, because ye lived  
before,  
Nor of our acts, because ye acted well.  
We thank you that ye first unlatched  
the door,  
But will not make it inaccessible  
By thankings on the threshold any  
more.  
We hurry onward to extinguish hell  
With our fresh souls, our younger  
hope, and God's  
Maturity of purpose. Soon shall we  
Die also! and, that then our periods  
Of life may round themselves to memory,  
As smoothly as on our graves the  
burial-sods,  
We now must look to it to excel as ye,  
And bear our age as far, unlimited  
By the last mind-mark! so, to be in-  
voked  
By future generations, as their Dead

'Tis true that when the dust of death  
has choked  
A great man's voice, the common  
words he said  
Turn oracles,—the common thoughts  
he yoked  
Like horses, draw like griffins!—this  
is true  
And acceptable. I, too, should desire,  
When men make record, with the  
flowers they strew,  
'Savonarola's soul went out in fire  
Upon our Grand-duke's piazza', and  
burned through  
A moment first, or ere he did expire,  
The veil betwixt the right and wrong,  
and showed  
How near God sate and judged the  
judges there,—  
Upon the self-same pavement over-  
strewed,  
To cast my violets with as reverent  
care,  
And prove that all the winters which  
have snowed

<sup>1</sup> Savonarola was burnt for his testimony  
against papal corruptions as early as March,  
1498: and, as late as our own day, it has been  
a custom in Florence to strew with violets the  
pavement where he suffered, in grateful recog-  
nition of the anniversary.

Cannot snow out the scent from stones  
 and air,  
 Of a sincere man's virtues. This  
 was he,  
 Savonarola, who, while Peter sank  
 With his whole boat-load, called  
 courageously  
 'Wake Christ, wake Christ!'—Who,  
 having tried the tank  
 Of old church-waters used for baptistry  
 Ere Luther came to spill them, swore  
 they stank!  
 Who also by a princely deathbed cried,  
 'Loose Florence, or God will not loose  
 thy soul!'  
 Then fell back the Magnificent and  
 died  
 Beneath the star-look, shooting from  
 the cowl,  
 Which turned to wormwood bitterness  
 the wide  
 Deep sea of his ambitions. It were foul  
 To grudge Savonarola and the rest  
 Their violets! rather pay them quick  
 and fresh!  
 The emphasis of death makes manifest  
 The eloquence of action in our flesh;  
 And men who, living, were but dimly  
 guessed,  
 When once free from their life's en-  
 tangled mesh,  
 Show their full length in graves, or  
 oft indeed  
 Exaggerate their stature, in the flat,  
 To noble admirations which exceed  
 Most nobly, yet will calculate in that  
 But accurately. We, who are the  
 seed  
 Of buried creatures, if we turned and  
 spat  
 Upon our antecedents, we were vile.  
 Bring violets rather! If these had not  
 walked  
 Their furlong, could we hope to walk  
 our mile?  
 Therefore bring violets. Yet if we,  
 self-balked,  
 Stand still, a-strewing violets all the  
 while,  
 These moved in vain, of whom we have  
 vainly talked.  
 So rise up henceforth with a cheerful  
 smile,

And having strewn the violets, reap the  
 corn,  
 And having reaped and garnered,  
 bring the plough  
 And draw new furrows 'neath the  
 healthy morn,  
 And plant the great Hereafter in this  
 Now.

Of old 'twas so. How step by step  
 was worn,  
 As each man gained on each, se-  
 curely!—how  
 Each by his own strength sought his  
 own ideal,—  
 The ultimate Perfection leaning bright  
 From out the sun and stars, to bless the  
 leal  
 And earnest search of all for Fair and  
 Right,  
 Through doubtful forms, by earth ac-  
 counted real!  
 Because old Jubal blew into delight  
 The souls of men, with clear-piped  
 melodies,  
 If youthful Asaph were content at  
 most  
 To draw from Jubal's grave, with  
 listening eyes,  
 Traditionary music's floating ghost  
 Into the grass-grown silence, were it  
 wise?  
 And was't not wiser, Jubal's breath  
 being lost,  
 That Miriam clashed her cymbals to  
 surprise  
 The sun between her white arms  
 flung apart,  
 With new, glad, golden sounds! that  
 David's strings  
 O'erflowed his hand with music from  
 his heart?  
 So harmony grows full from many  
 springs,  
 And happy accident turns holy art.

You enter, in your Florence wanderings,  
 The church of St. Maria Novella. Pass  
 The left stair, where at plague-time  
 Macchiavel<sup>1</sup>

Saw One with set fair face as in a glass,

<sup>1</sup> See his description of the plague in Florence.

Dressed out against the fear of death  
and hell,  
Rustling her silks in pauses of the  
mass,  
To keep the thought off how her hus-  
band fell,  
When she left home, stark dead across  
her feet,—  
The stair leads up to what the Orgagnas  
save  
Of Dante's demons: you, in pass-  
ing it,  
Ascend the right stair from the farther  
nave,  
To muse in a small chapel scarcely lit  
By Cimabue's Virgin. Bright and brave,  
That picture was accounted, mark, of  
old.  
A king stood bare before its sovran  
grace<sup>1</sup>,  
A reverent people shouted to behold  
The picture, not the king, and even the  
place  
Containing such a miracle, grew bold,  
Named the Glad Borgo from that beau-  
teous face,—  
Which thrilled the artist, after work,  
to think  
His own ideal Mary-smile should stand  
So very near him,—he, within the  
brink  
Of all that glory, let in by his hand  
With too divine a rashness! Yet none  
shrink  
Who come to gaze here now—albeit  
'twas planned  
Sublimely in the thought's simplicity.  
The Lady, throned in empyreal state,  
Minds only the young babe upon her  
knee,  
While sidelong angels bear the royal  
weight,  
Prostrated meekly, smiling tenderly  
Oblivion of their wings; the Child  
thereat

Stretching its hand like God. If any  
should,  
Because of some stiff draperies and  
loose joints,  
Gaze scorn down from the heights of  
Raffaello, down,  
On Cimabue's picture,—Heaven anoints  
The head of no such critic, and his  
blood  
The poet's curse strikes full on and  
appoints  
To ague and cold spasms for ever-  
more.  
A noble picture! worthy of the shout  
Wherewith along the streets the  
people bore  
Its cherub faces, which the sun threw  
out  
Until they stooped and entered the  
church door!—  
Yet rightly was young Giotto talked  
about,  
Whom Cimabue found among the  
sheep<sup>2</sup>,  
And knew, as gods know gods, and  
carried home  
To paint the things he had painted,  
with a deep  
And fuller insight, and so overcome  
His chapel-lady with a heavenlier  
sweep  
Of light. For thus we mount into the  
sum  
Of great things known or acted. I  
hold, too,  
That Cimabue smiled upon the lad,  
At the first stroke which passed what  
he could do,—  
Or else his Virgin's smile had never had  
Such sweetness in 't. All great men  
who foreknew  
Their heirs in art, for art's sake have  
been glad,  
And bent their old white heads as if  
uncrowned,  
Fanatics of their pure ideals still  
Far more than of their triumphs, which  
were found

<sup>1</sup> Charles of Anjou, in his passage through Florence, was permitted to see this picture while yet in Cimabue's 'bottega.' The populace followed the royal visitor, and, from the universal delight and admiration, the quarter of the city in which the artist lived was called 'Borgo Allegri.' The picture was carried in triumph to the church, and deposited there.

<sup>2</sup> How Cimabue found Giotto, the shepherd-boy, sketching a ram of his flock upon a stone, is prettily told by Vasari,—who also relates that the elder artist Margheritone died 'infastidito' of the successes of the new school.

With some less vehement struggle of the will.

If old Margheritone trembled, swooned,  
And died despairing at the open sill  
Of other men's achievements (who achieved,

By loving art beyond the master!), he  
Was old Margheritone, and conceived  
Never, at first youth and most ecstasy,  
A Virgin like that dream of one, which  
heaved

The death-sigh from his heart. If wistfully  
Margheritone sickened at the smell  
Of Cimabue's laurel, let him go!—

For Cimabue stood up very well  
In spite of Giotto's—and Angelico,  
The artist-saint, kept smiling in his cell  
The smile with which he welcomed the  
sweet slow

Inbreak of angels (whitening through  
the dim  
That he might paint them!), while the  
sudden sense

Of Raffael's future was revealed to him  
By force of his own fair works' competence.

The same blue waters where the dolphins swim  
Suggest the tritons. Through the blue  
Immense,

Strike out, all swimmers! cling not in  
the way  
Of one another, so to sink; but learn

The strong man's impulse, catch the  
fresh'ning spray  
He throws up in his motions, and discern  
By his clear, westering eye, the time  
of day.

Thou, God, hast set us worthy gifts to  
earn,

Besides Thy heaven and Thee! and  
when I say  
There's room here for the weakest man  
alive

To live and die,—there's room too,  
I repeat,  
For all the strongest to live well, and strive  
Their own way, by their individual  
heat,—

Like some new bee-swarm leaving the  
old hive,

Despite the wax which tempts so  
violet-sweet.

Then let the living live, the dead retain  
Their grave-cold flowers!—though  
honour's best supplied

By bringing actions, to prove theirs not  
vain.

Cold graves, we say! it shall be testified  
That living men who burn in heart and  
brain,

Without the dead, were colder. If we  
tried

To sink the past beneath our feet, be sure  
The future would not stand. Precipitate

This old roof from the shrine—and,  
insecure,

The nesting swallows fly off, mate from  
mate.

How scant the gardens, if the graves  
were fewer!

The tall green poplars grew no longer  
straight,

Whose tops not looked to Troy. Would  
any fight

For Athens, and not swear by Marathon?

Who dared build temples, without tombs  
in sight?

Or live, without some dead man's  
benison?

Or seek truth, hope for good, and strive  
for right,

If, looking up, he saw not in the sun  
Some angel of the martyrs all day long

Standing and waiting! Your last  
rhythm will need

Your earliest key-note. Could I sing  
this song,

If my dead masters had not taken  
heed

To help the heavens and earth to make  
me strong,

As the wind ever will find out some  
reed,

And touch it to such issues as belong  
To such a frail thing? None may

grudge the dead  
Libations from full cups. Unless we  
choose

To look back to the hills behind us  
spread,

The plains before us sadden and confuse;  
If orphaned, we are disinherited.

I would but turn these lachrymals to use,  
 And pour fresh oil in from the olive  
 grove,  
 To furnish them as new lamps. Shall I  
 say  
 What mademy heart beat with exulting  
 love,  
 A few weeks back!—  
 . . . . The day was such a day  
 As Florence owes the sun. The sky  
 above,  
 Its weight upon the mountains seemed to  
 lay,  
 And palpitate in glory, like a dove  
 Who has flown too fast, full-hearted!—  
 take away  
 The image! for the heart of man beat  
 higher  
 That day in Florence, flooding all her  
 streets  
 And piazzas with a tumult and desire.  
 The people, with accumulated heats,  
 And faces turned one way, as if one  
 fire  
 Both drew and flushed them, left their  
 ancient beats,  
 And went up toward the palace-Pitti  
 wall,  
 To thank their Grand-duke, who, not  
 quite of course,  
 Had graciously permitted, at their call,  
 The citizens to use their civic force  
 To guard their civic homes. So, one  
 and all,  
 The Tuscan cities streamed up to the  
 source  
 Of this new good, at Florence, taking it  
 As good so far, presageful of more good,—  
 The first torch of Italian freedom, lit  
 To toss in the next tiger's face who  
 should  
 Approach too near them in a greedy  
 fit,—  
 The first pulse of an even flow of blood,  
 To prove the level of Italian veins  
 Toward rights perceived and granted.  
 How we gazed  
 From Casa Guidi windows, while, in  
 trains  
 Of orderly procession—banners raised,  
 And intermittent bursts of martial  
 strains  
 Which died upon the shout, as if amazed

By gladness beyond music—they  
 passed on!  
 The Magistracy, with insignia, passed.—  
 And all the people shouted in the  
 sun,  
 And all the thousand windows which  
 had cast  
 A ripple of silks, in blue and scarlet,  
 down  
 (As if the houses overflowed at last),  
 Seemed growing larger with fair heads  
 and eyes.  
 The Lawyers passed,—and still arose  
 the shout,  
 And hands broke from the windows  
 to surprise  
 Those grave calm brows with bay-tree  
 leaves thrown out.  
 The Priesthood passed,—the friars  
 with worldly-wise  
 Keen sidelong glances from their beards  
 about  
 The street to see who shouted! many  
 a monk  
 Who takes a long rope in the waist,  
 was there!  
 Whereat the popular exultation drunk  
 With indrawn 'vivas' the whole sunny  
 air,  
 While, through the murmuring win-  
 dows, rose and sunk  
 A cloud of kerchiefed hands,—'The  
 Church makes fair  
 Her welcome in the new Pope's name.'  
 Ensued  
 The black sign of the 'Martyrs!' (name  
 no name,  
 But count the graves in silence). Next,  
 were viewed  
 The Artists; next, the Trades; and after  
 came  
 The People,—flag and sign, and rights  
 as good,—  
 And very loud the shout was for that  
 same  
 Motto, 'Il popolo.' IL POPOLO,—  
 The word means dukedom, empire,  
 majesty,  
 And kings in such an hour might read  
 it so.  
 And next, with banners, each in his  
 degree,  
 Deputed representatives a-row

Of every separate state of Tuscany.

Siena's she-wolf, bristling on the fold  
Of the first flag, preceded Pisa's hare,  
And Massa's lion floated calm in gold,  
Pienza's following with his silver stare.  
Arezzo's steed pranced clear from  
bridle-hold,—

And well might shout our Florence,  
greeting there

These, and more brethren. Last, the  
world had sent

The various children of her teeming  
flanks—

Greeks, English, French—as if to a  
parliament

Of lovers of her Italy in ranks,  
Each bearing its land's symbol reverent.

At which the stones seemed breaking  
into thanks

And rattling up the sky, such sounds  
in proof

Arose; the very house-walls seemed to  
bend;

The very windows, up from door to  
roof,

Flashed out a rapture of bright heads, to  
mend

With passionate looks, the gesture's  
whirling off

A hurricane of leaves. Three hours did  
end

While all these passed; and ever in  
the crowd,

Rude men, unconscious of the tears that  
kept

Their beards moist, shouted; some few  
laughed aloud,

And none asked any why they laughed  
and wept.

Friends kissed each other's cheeks,  
and foes long vowed

More warmly did it,—two-months' babies  
leapt

Right upward in their mothers' arms,  
whose black,

Wide, glittering eyes looked elsewhere;  
lovers pressed

Each before either, neither glancing  
back;

And peasant maidens, smoothly 'tired  
and tressed,

Forgot to finger on their throats the  
slack

Great pearl-strings; while old blind men  
would not rest,

But pattered with their staves and slid  
their shoes

Along the stones, and smiled as if they  
saw.

O heaven, I think that day had noble use  
Among God's days. So near stood Right

and Law,  
Both mutually forborne! Law would  
not bruise,

Nor Right deny, and each in reverent awe  
Honoured the other. And if, ne'er-

theless,

That good day's sun delivered to the vines  
No charta, and the liberal Duke's

excess

Did scarce exceed a Guelf's or Ghibel-  
line's

In any special actual righteousness  
Of what that day he granted, still the signs

Are good and full of promise, we must  
say,

When multitudes approach their kings-  
with prayers

And kings concede their people's right  
to pray,

Both in one sunshine. Grievs are not  
despairs,

So uttered, nor can royal claims dismay  
When men from humble homes and ducal

chairs  
Hate wrong together. It was well to  
view

Those banners ruffled in a ruler's face  
Inscribed, 'Live freedom, union, and

all true

Brave patriots who are aided by God's  
grace!

Nor was it ill, when Leopoldo drew  
His little children to the window-place

He stood in at the Pitti, to suggest  
They too should govern as the people

willed.  
What a cry rose then! some, who saw  
the best,

Declared his eyes filled up and overfilled  
With good warm human tears which

unrepressed

Ran down. I like his face; the fore-  
head's build

Has no capacious genius, yet perhaps  
Sufficient comprehension,—mild and sad,

And careful nobly,—not with care that wraps  
 Self-loving hearts, to stifle and make mad,  
 But careful with the care that shuns a lapse  
 Of faith and duty, studious not to add  
 A burden in the gathering of a gain.  
 And so, God save the Duke, I say with those  
 Who that day shouted it, and while dukes reign,  
 May all wear in the visible overflows  
 Of spirit, such a look of careful pain!  
 For God must love it better than repose.

And all the people who went up to let  
 Their hearts out to that Duke, as has been told—  
 Where guess ye that the living people met,  
 Kept tryst, formed ranks, chose leaders, first unrolled  
 Their banners?  
 In the Loggia! where is set  
 Cellini's godlike Perseus, bronze—or gold—  
 (How name the metal, when the statue flings  
 Its soul so in your eyes!) with brow and sword  
 Superbly calm, as all opposing things,  
 Slain with the Gorgon, were no more  
 Abhorred  
 Since ended?  
 No, the people sought no wings  
 From Perseus in the Loggia, nor implored  
 An inspiration in the place beside,  
 From that dim bust of Brutus, jagged  
 And grand,  
 Where Buonarroti passionately tried  
 From out the close-clenched marble  
 To demand  
 The head of Rome's sublimest homicide,—  
 Then dropt the quivering mallet from  
 His hand,  
 Despairing he could find no model-stuff  
 Of Brutus, in all Florence, where he found  
 The gods and gladiators thick enough.  
 Nor there! the people chose still holier  
 Ground!

The people, who are simple, blind, and rough,  
 Know their own angels, after looking round.

Whom chose they then? where met they?

On the stone  
 Called Dante's,—a plain flat stone,  
 Scarce discerned

From others in the pavement,—where-upon

He used to bring his quiet chair out,  
 Turned

To Brunelleschi's church, and pour alone  
 The lava of his spirit when it burned.

It is not cold to-day. O passionate  
 Poor Dante, who, a banished Florentine,

Didst sit austere at banquets of the great,

And muse upon this far-off stone of thine,

And think how oft some passer used to wait

A moment, in the golden day's decline,  
 With 'Good night, dearest Dante!'—  
 Well, good night!

I muse now, Dante, and think, verily,  
 Though chapelled in the by-way, out of sight,

Ravenna's bones would thrill with ecstasy,

Couldst know thy favourite stone's elected right

As tryst-place for thy Tuscans to foresee

Their earliest chartas from. Good night,  
 Good morn,

Henceforward, Dante! now my soul  
 Is sure

That thine is better comforted of scorn,  
 And looks down earthward in completer cure,

Than when, in Santa Croce church forlorn

Of any corpse, the architect and hewer  
 Did pile the empty marbles as thy tomb<sup>1</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> The Florentines, to whom the Ravennese refused the body of Dante (demanded of them 'in a late remorse of love'), have given a cenotaph in this church to their divine poet. Something less than a grave!

For now thou art no longer exiled,  
now  
Best honoured!—we salute thee who art  
come

Back to the old stone with a softer  
brow  
Than Giotto drew upon the wall, for some  
Good lovers of our age to track and  
plough<sup>1</sup>  
Their way to, through time's ordures  
stratified,

And startle broad awake into the dull  
Bargello chamber! now, thou 'rt milder  
eyed,—

Now Beatrice may leap up glad to cull  
Thy first smile, even in heaven and at  
her side,

Like that which, nine years old, looked  
beautiful  
At May-game. What do I say? I only  
meant

That tender Dante loved his Florence  
well,  
While Florence, now, to love him is  
content;

And, mark ye, that the piercingest  
sweet smell

Of love's dear incense by the living sent  
To find the dead, is not accessible

To lazy livers! no narcotic,—not  
Swung in a censer to a sleepy tune,—

But trod out in the morning air, by hot  
Quick spirits, who tread firm to ends  
foreshown,

And use the name of greatness unforgot,  
To meditate what greatness may be  
done.

For Dante sits in heaven, and ye stand  
here,

And more remains for doing, all must  
feel,

Than trysting on his stone from year to  
year

To shift processions, civic toe to heel,  
The town's thanks to the Pitti. Are ye  
freer

For what was felt that day? a chariot-  
wheel

May spin fast, yet the chariot never roll.

<sup>1</sup> In allusion to Mr. Kirkup's discovery of  
Giotto's fresco-portrait of Dante.

But if that day suggested something  
good,  
And bettered, with one purpose, soul by  
soul,—

Better means freer. A land's brother-  
hood

Is most puissant: men, upon the whole,  
Are what they can be,—nations, what  
they would.

Will, therefore, to be strong, thou Italy!  
Will to be noble! Austrian Metternich  
Can fix no yoke unless the neck agree;  
And thine is like the lion's when the  
thick

Dews shudder from it, and no man  
would be

The stroker of his mane, much less  
would prick

His nostril with a reed. When nations  
roar

Like lions, who shall tame them, and  
defraud

Of the due pasture by the river-shore?  
Roar, therefore! shake your dew-laps  
dry abroad.

The amphitheatre with open door  
Leads back upon the benchers, who  
applaud

The last spear-thruster.

Yet the Heavens forbid  
That we should call on passion to con-  
front

The brutal with the brutal, and, amid  
This ripening world, suggest a lion's-  
hunt

And lion's-vengeance for the wrongs  
men did

And do now, though the spears are  
getting blunt.

We only call, because the sight and  
proof

Of lion-strength hurts nothing; and to  
show

A lion-heart, and measure paw with  
hoof,

Helps something, even, and will in-  
struct a foe

As well as the onslaught, how to stand  
aloof!

Or else the world gets past the mere  
brute blow

Or given or taken. Children use the fist  
 Until they are of age to use the brain;  
 And so we needed Caesars to assist  
 Man's justice, and Napoleons to explain  
 God's counsel, when a point was nearly  
 missed,  
 Until our generations should attain  
 Christ's stature nearer. Not that we,  
 alas,  
 Attain already; but a single inch  
 Will raise to look down on the swordsmen's  
 pass,  
 As knightly Roland on the coward's  
 flinch:  
 And, after chloroform and ether-gas,  
 We find out slowly what the bee and  
 finch  
 Have ready found, through Nature's lamp  
 in each,  
 How to our races we may justify  
 Our individual claims, and, as we reach  
 Our own grapes, bend the top vines  
 to supply  
 The children's uses,—how to fill a breach  
 With olive branches,—how to quench  
 a lie  
 With truth, and smite a foe upon the  
 cheek  
 With Christ's most conquering kiss.  
 Why, these are things  
 Worth a great nation's finding, to prove  
 weak  
 The 'glorious arms' of military kings.  
 And so with wide embrace, my England,  
 seek  
 To stifle the bad heat and flickerings  
 Of this world's false and nearly expended  
 fire!  
 Draw palpitating arrows to the wood,  
 And twang abroad thy high hopes, and  
 thy higher  
 Resolves, from that most virtuous  
 altitude!  
 Till nations shall unconsciously aspire  
 By looking up to thee, and learn that  
 good  
 And glory are not different. Announce  
 law  
 By freedom; exalt chivalry by peace;  
 Instruct how clear calm eyes can overawe,  
 And how pure hands, stretched simply  
 to release

A bond-slave, will not need a sword to  
 draw  
 To be held dreadful. O my England,  
 crease  
 Thy purple with no alien agonies!  
 No struggles toward encroachment, no  
 vile war!  
 Disband thy captains, change thy vic-  
 tories,  
 Be henceforth prosperous as the angels  
 are,  
 Helping, not humbling.

Drums and battle cries  
 Go out in music of the morning star—  
 And soon we shall have thinkers in the  
 place  
 Of fighters, each found able as a man  
 To strike electric influence through a  
 race,  
 Unstayed by city-wall and barbican.  
 The poet shall look grander in the face  
 Than even of old (when he of Greece  
 began  
 To sing 'that Achillean wrath which slew  
 So many heroes'),—seeing he shall  
 treat  
 The deeds of souls heroic toward the  
 true—  
 The oracles of life—previsions sweet  
 And awful, like divine swans gliding  
 through  
 White arms of Leda, which will leave  
 the heat  
 Of their escaping godship to endure  
 The human medium with a heavenly  
 flush.

Meanwhile, in this same Italy we want  
 Not popular passion, to arise and  
 crush,  
 But popular conscience, which may  
 covenant  
 For what it knows. Concede without  
 a blush,  
 To grant the 'civic guard' is not to grant  
 The civic spirit, living and awake.  
 Thoselappets on your shoulders, citizens,  
 Your eyes strain after sideways till  
 they ache,  
 (While still, in admirations and amens,  
 The crowd comes up on festa-days, to  
 take

The great sight in)—are not intelligence,  
Not courage even—alas, if not the sign  
Of something very noble, they are  
nought;

For every day ye dress your sallow kine  
With fringes down their cheeks, though  
unbesought

They loll their heavy heads and drag  
the wine,  
And bear the wooden yoke as they were  
taught

The first day. What ye want is  
light—indeed  
Not sunlight—(ye may well look up  
surprised

To those unfathomable heavens that  
feed  
Your purple hills!)—but God's light  
organized

In some high soul, crowned capable  
to lead

The conscious people, conscious and  
advised,—

For if we lift a people like mere clay,  
It falls the same. We want thee, O  
unfounded

And sovran teacher!—if thy beard be  
grey

Or black, we bid thee rise up from the  
ground

And speak the word God giveth thee  
to say,

Inspiring into all this people round,  
Instead of passion, thought, which  
pioneers

All generous passion, purifies from sin,  
And strikes the hour for. Rise up  
teacher! here's

A crowd to make a nation!—best begin  
By making each a man, till all be peers  
Of earth's true patriots and pure martyrs  
in

Knowing and daring. Best unbar the  
doors

Which Peter's heirs keep locked so  
overclose

They only let the mice across the  
floors,

While every churchman dangles, as he  
goes,

The great key at his girdle, and abhors  
In Christ's name, meekly. Open wide  
the house,

Concede the entrance with Christ's  
liberal mind,  
And set the tables with His wine and  
bread.

What! 'commune in both kinds?'  
In every kind—

Wine, wafer, love, hope, truth, un-  
limited,

Nothing kept back. For when a man  
is blind

To starlight, will he see the rose is  
red?

A bondsman shivering at a Jesuit's  
foot—

'Vae! mea culpa!' is not like to stand  
A freedman at a despot's, and dispute  
His titles by the balance in his hand,  
Weighing them 'suo jure.' Tend the  
root

If careful of the branches, and expand  
The inner souls of men before you  
strive

For civic heroes.

But the teacher, where?  
From all these crowded faces, all alive,  
Eyes, of their own lids flashing them-  
selves bare,

And brows that with a mobile life  
contrive

A deeper shadow,—may we in no wise  
dare

To put a finger out, and touch a man,  
And cry 'this is the leader!' What,  
all these!—

Broad heads, black eyes,—yet not  
a soul that ran

From God down with a message? all,  
to please

The donna waving measures with her  
fan,

And not the judgement-angel on his knees  
(The trumpet just an inch off from his  
lips),

Who when he breathes next, will put  
out the sun?

Yet mankind's self were foundered in  
eclipse,

If lacking doers, with great works to be  
done;

And lo, the startled earth already dips  
Back into light—a better day's begun—

And soon this leader, teacher, will  
stand plain,  
And build the golden pipes and synthesize  
This people-organ for a holy strain.  
We hold this hope, and still in all these  
eyes,  
Go sounding for the deep look which  
shall drain  
Suffused thought into channelled enter-  
prise.  
Where is the teacher? What now  
may he do,  
Who shall do greatly? Doth he gird  
his waist  
With a monk's rope, like Luther? or  
pursue  
The goat, like Tell? or dry his nets in  
haste,  
Like Masaniello when the sky was  
blue?  
Keep house, like other peasants, with  
inlaced,  
Barc, brawny arms about a favourite  
child,  
And meditative looks beyond the door,  
(But not to mark the kidding's teeth  
have filed  
The green shoots of his vine which last  
year bore  
Full twenty bunches,) or, on triple-  
piled  
Throne-velvets sit at ease, to bless the  
poor,  
Like other pontiffs, in the Poorest's  
name?  
The old tiara keeps itself aslope  
Upon his steady brows, which, all the  
same,  
Bend mildly to permit the people's hope?  
Whatever hand shall grasp this ori-  
flamme,  
Whatever man (last peasant or first  
pope  
Seeking to free his country!) shall  
appear,  
Teach, lead, strike fire into the masses, fill  
These empty bladders with fine air,  
insphere  
These wills into a unity of will,  
And make of Italy a nation—dear  
And blessed be that man! the Heavens  
shall kill

No leaf the earth lets grow for him,  
and Death  
Shall cast him back upon the lap of Life  
To live more surely, in a clarion-  
breath  
Of hero-music. Brutus, with the knife,  
Rienzi, with the fasces, throb beneath  
Rome's stones,—and more,—who threw  
away joy's life  
Like Pallas, that the beauty of their  
souls  
Might ever shine untroubled and entire.  
But if it can be true that he who  
rolls  
The Church's thunders, will reserve her  
fire  
For only light,—from eucharistic  
bowls  
Will pour new life for nations that ex-  
pire,  
And rend the scarlet of his papal vest  
To gird the weak loins of his country-  
men—  
I hold that he surpasses all the rest  
Of Romans, heroes, patriots,—and that  
when  
He sat down on the throne, he dis-  
possessed  
The first graves of some glory. See  
again,  
This country-saving is a glorious thing,  
And if a common man achieved it?  
well.  
Say, a rich man did? excellent. A  
king?  
That grows sublime. A priest? im-  
probable.  
A pope? Ah, there we stop, and  
cannot bring  
Our faith up to the leap, with history's  
bell  
So heavy round the neck of it—albeit  
We fain would grant the possibility,  
For *thy* sake, Pio Nono!

Stretch thy feet  
In that case—I will kiss them reverently  
As any pilgrim to the papal seat!  
And, such proved possible, thy throne  
to me  
Shall seem as holy a place as Pellico's  
Venetian dungeon, or as Spielberg's  
grate,

At which the Lombard woman hung  
the rose  
Of her sweet soul, by its own dewy  
weight,  
To feel the dungeon round her sun-  
shine close,  
And pining so, died early, yet too late  
For what she suffered. Yea, I will  
not choose  
Betwixt thy throne, Pope Pius, and the  
spot  
Marked red for ever, spite of rains  
and dews.  
Where two fell riddled by the Aus-  
trian's shot,  
The brothers Bandiera, who accuse,  
With one same mother-voice and face  
(that what  
They speak may be invincible) the sins  
Of earth's tormentors before God the  
just,  
Until the unconscious thunder-bolt  
begins  
To loosen in His grasp.

And yet we must  
Beware, and mark the natural kiths  
and kins  
Of circumstance and office, and distrust  
The rich man reasoning in a poor  
man's hut,  
The poet who neglects pure truth to  
prove  
Statistic fact, the child who leaves a rut  
For a smoother road, the priest who  
vows his glove  
Exhales no grace, the prince who  
walks a-foot,  
The woman who has sworn she will  
not love,  
And this Ninth Pius in Seventh  
Gregory's chair.  
With Andrea Doria's forehead!

Count what goes  
To making up a pope, before he  
wear  
That triple crown. We pass the world-  
wide throes  
Which went to make the popedom,—  
the despair  
Of free men, good men, wise men; the  
dread shows

Of women's faces, by the faggot's flash,  
Tossed out, to the minutest stir and throb  
O' the white lips, the least tremble  
of a lash,  
To glut the red stare of a licensed mob;  
The short mad cries down oubliettes,  
and plash  
So horribly far off; priests, trained to rob,  
And kings that, like encouraged  
nightmares, sate  
On nations' hearts most heavily distressed  
With monstrous sights and apoph-  
thegms of fate!—  
We pass these things,—because 'the  
times' are prest  
With necessary charges of the weight  
Of all this sin, and 'Calvin, for the rest,  
Made bold to burn Servetus—Ah, men  
err!'—  
And, so do *churches*! which is all we mean  
To bring to proof in any register  
Of theological fat kine and lean—  
So drive them back into the pens! refer  
Old sins (with pourpoint, 'quotha' and  
'I ween')  
Entirely to the old times, the old times;  
Nor ever ask why this preponderant,  
Infallible, pure Church could set her  
chimes  
Most loudly then, just then,—most ju-  
bilant,  
Precisely then—when mankind stood  
in crimes  
Full heart-deep, and Heaven's judge-  
ments were not scant.  
Inquire still less, what signifies a  
church  
Of perfect inspiration and pure laws,  
Who burns the first man with a  
brimstone-torch,  
And grinds the second, bone by bone,  
because  
The times, forsooth, are used to rack  
and scorch!  
What is a holy Church, unless she awes.  
The times down from their sias?  
Did Christ select  
Such amiable times, to come and teach  
Love to, and mercy? The whole  
world were wrecked,  
If every mere great man, who lives to-  
reach  
A little leaf of popular respect,

Attained not simply by some special  
breach

In the age's customs, by some pre-  
cedence

In thought and act, which, having proved  
him higher

Than those he lived with, proved his  
competence

In helping them to wonder and aspire.

My words are guiltless of the bigot's  
sense.

My soul has fire to mingle with the fire  
Of all these souls, within or out of  
doors

Of Rome's church or another. I believe  
In one Priest, and one temple, with  
its floors

Of shining jasper gloom'd at morn and  
eve

By countless knees of earnest audi-  
tors,

And crystal walls, too lucid to perceive,  
That none may take the measure of  
the place

And say, 'So far the porphyry, then,  
the flint—

To this mark, mercy goes, and there,  
ends grace,'

Though still the permeable crystals hint  
At some white starry distance, bathed  
in space.

I feel how nature's ice-crusts keep the  
dint

Of undersprings of silent Deity.

I hold the articulated gospels, which

Show Christ among us, crucified on  
tree.

I love all who love truth, if poor or rich  
In what they have won of truth  
possessively.

No altars and no hands defiled with  
pitch

Shall scare me off, but I will pray and  
eat

With all these—taking leave to choose  
my ewers

And say at last, 'Your visible churches  
cheat

Their inward types,—and, if a church  
assures

Of standing without failure and defeat,  
The same both fails and lies.'

To leave which lures

Of wider subject through past years,  
—behold,

We come back from the popedom to the  
pope,

To ponder what he *must* be, ere we  
are hold

For what he *may* be, with our heavy hope  
To trust upon his soul. So, fold by  
fold,

Explore this mummy in the priestly cope,  
Transmitted through the darks of time,  
to catch

The man within the wrappage, and dis-  
cern

How he, an honest man, upon the  
watch

Full fifty years, for what a man may  
learn,

Contrived to get just there; with what  
a snatch

Of old-world oboli he had to earn

The passage through; with what a  
drowsy sop,

To drench the busy barkings of his brain;  
What ghosts of pale tradition,  
wreathed with hop

'Gainst wakeful thought, he had to enter-  
tain

For heavenly visions; and consent to  
stop

The clock at noon, and let the hour re-  
main

(Without vain windings up) inviolate,  
Against all chimings from the belfry.  
Lo,

From every given pope you must abate,  
Albeit you love him, some things—good,  
you know—

Which every given heretic you hate,  
Assumes for his, as being plainly so.

A pope must hold by popes a little,—  
yes,

By councils,—from Nicaea up to Trent,—  
By hierocratic empire, more or less

Irresponsible to men,—he must resent  
Each man's particular conscience, and  
repress

Inquiry, meditation, argument,  
As tyrants faction. Also, he must not

Love truth too dangerously, but prefer  
'The interests of the Church' (because

a blot

Is better than a rent, in miniver),  
 Submit to see the people swallow hot  
 Husk-porridge, which his chartered  
 churchmen stir

Quoting the only true God's epigraph,  
 'Feed my lambs, Peter!'—must consent  
 to sit

Attesting with his pastoral ring and  
 staff,

To such a picture of our Lady, hit  
 Off well by artist angels (though not  
 half

As *sfairas* Giotto would have painted it)—  
 To such a vial, where a dead man's  
 blood

Runs yearly warm beneath a church-  
 man's finger;

To such a holy house of stone and  
 wood,

Whereof a cloud of angels was the  
 bringer

From Bethlehem to Loreto.—Were  
 it good

For any pope on earth to be a flinger  
 Of stones against these high-niched  
 counterfeits?

Apostates only are iconoclasts.

He dares not say, while this false  
 thing abets

That true thing, 'this is false.' He  
 keeps his fasts

And prayers, as prayer and fast were  
 silver frets

To change a note upon a string that  
 lasts,

And make a lie a virtue. Now, if he  
 Did more than this, higher hoped, and  
 braver dared,

I think he were a pope in jeopardy,  
 Or no pope rather, for his truth had  
 barred

The vaulting of his life,—and certainly,  
 If he do only this, mankind's regard

Moves on from him at once, to seek  
 some new

Teacher and leader. He is good and  
 great

According to the deeds a pope can do;  
 Most liberal, save those bonds; affection-  
 ate,

As princes may be, and, as priests  
 are, true;

But only the ninth Pius after eight,

When all's praised most. At best and  
 hopefullest,

He's pope—we want a man! his heart  
 beats warm,

But, like the prince enchanted to the  
 waist,

He sits in stone, and hardens by a charm  
 Into the marble of his throne high-  
 placed.

Mild benediction, waves his saintly arm—  
 So, good! but what we want's a per-  
 fect man,

Complete and all alive: half travertine  
 Half suits our need, and ill subserves  
 our plan.

Feet, knees, nerves, sinews, energies  
 divine

Were never yet too much for men  
 who ran

In such hard ways as must be this of thine,  
 Deliverer whom we seek, whoe'er thou  
 art,

Pope, prince, or peasant! If, indeed,  
 the first,

The noblest, therefore! since the  
 heroic heart

Within thee must be great enough to burst  
 Those trammels buckling to the baser  
 part

Thy saintly peers in Rome, who crossed  
 and cursed

With the same finger.

Come, appear, be found,

If pope or peasant, come! we hear the  
 cock,

The courtier of the mountains when  
 first crowned

With golden dawn; and orient glories  
 flock

To meet the sun upon the highest  
 ground.

Take voice and work! we wait to hear  
 thee knock

At some one of our Florentine nine  
 gates,

On each of which was imaged a sublime  
 Face of a Tuscan genius, which, for  
 hate's

And love's sake, both, our Florence in  
 her prime

Turned boldly on all comers to her  
 states,

As heroes turned their shields in antique  
time,

Emblazoned with honourable acts.  
And though

The gates are blank now of such images,  
And Petrarch looks no more from  
Nicolo

Toward dear Arezzo, 'twixt the acacia  
trees,

Nor Dante, from gate Gallo—still we  
know,

Despite the razing of the blazonries,  
Remains the consecration of the shield!

The dead heroic faces will start out  
On all these gates, if foes should take  
the field,

And blend sublimely, at the earliest shout,  
With living heroes who will scorn to  
yield

A hair's-breadth even, when, gazing  
round about,

They find in what a glorious company  
They fight the foes of Florence. Who  
will grudge

His one poor life, when that great  
man we see

Has given five hundred years, the world  
being judge,

To help the glory of his Italy!  
Who, born the fair side of the Alps, will  
budge,

When Dante stays, when Ariosto stays,  
When Petrarch stays for ever? Ye bring  
swords,

My Tuscans! Aye, if wanted in this  
haze,

Bring swords. But first bring souls!—  
bring thoughts and words,

Untrusted by a tear of yesterday's,  
Yet awful by its wrong,—and cut these  
cords,

And mow this green lush falseness to  
the roots,

And shut the mouth of hell below the  
swathe!

And, if ye can bring songs too, let the  
lute's

Recoverable music softly bathe  
Some poet's hand, that, through all  
bursts and bruits

Of popular passion, all unripe and rather  
Convictions of the popular intellect,  
Ye may not lack a finger up the air,

Annunciative, reproving, pure, erect,  
To show which way your first Ideal bare

The whiteness of its wings, when  
(sorely pecked

By falcons on your wrists) it unaware  
Arose up overhead, and out of sight.

Meanwhile, let all the far ends of the  
world

Breathe back the deep breath of their  
old delight.

To swell the Italian banner just unfurled.  
Help, lands of Europe! for, if Austria  
fight,

The drums will bar your slumber. Had  
ye curled

The laurel for your thousand artists'  
brows,

If these Italian hands had planted none?  
Can any sit down idle in the house,

Nor hear appeals from Buonarroti's stone  
And Raffael's canvas, rousing and to  
rouse?

Where's Poussin's master? Gallic  
Avignon

Bred Laura, and Vacluse's fount has  
stirred

The heart of France too strongly, as it lets  
Its little stream out (like a wizard's  
bird

Which bounds upon its emerald wing  
and wets

The rocks on each side), that she should  
not gird

Her loins with Charlemagne's sword  
when foes beset

The country of her Petrarch. Spain  
may well

Be minded how from Italy she caught,  
To mingle with her tinkling Moorish  
bell,

A fuller cadence and a subtler thought.  
And even the New World, the recep-  
tacle

Of freemen, may send glad men, as it  
ought,

To greet Vespucci Amerigo's door.  
While England claims, by trump of  
poetry,

Verona, Venice, the Ravenna-shore,  
And dearer holds John Milton's Fiesole  
Than Langland's Malvern with the  
stars in flower.

And Vallombrosa, we two went to see  
 Last June, beloved companion,—  
 where sublime  
 The mountains live in holy families,  
 And the slow pinewoods ever climb  
 and climb  
 Halfup their breasts, just stagger as they  
 seize  
 Some grey crag, drop back with it  
 many a time,  
 And straggle blindly down the precipice!  
 The Vallombrosan brooks were strewn  
 as thick  
 That June-day, knee-deep, with dead  
 beechen leaves,  
 As Milton saw them, ere his heart  
 grew sick  
 And his eyes blind. I think the monks  
 and beeves  
 Are all the same too. Scarce they have  
 changed the wick  
 On good St. Gualbert's altar, which re-  
 ceives  
 The convent's pilgrims,—and the pool  
 in front  
 (Wherein the hill-stream trout are cast,  
 to wait  
 The beatific vision and the grunt  
 Used at refectory) keeps its weedy state,  
 To baffle saintly abbots who would  
 count  
 The fish across their breviary nor 'bate  
 The measure of their steps. O water-  
 falls  
 And forests! sound and silence! moun-  
 tains bare,  
 That leap up peak by peak, and catch  
 the palls  
 Of purple and silver mist to rend and  
 share  
 With one another, at electric calls  
 Of life in the sunbeams,—till we cannot  
 dare  
 Fix your shapes, count your number!  
 we must think  
 Your beauty and your glory helped to fill  
 The cup of Milton's soul so to the brink,  
 He never more was thirsty, when God's  
 will  
 Had shattered to his sense the last  
 chain-link  
 By which he had drawn from Nature's  
 visible

The fresh well-water. Satisfied by this,  
 He sang of Adam's paradise and smiled,  
 Remembering Vallombrosa. There-  
 fore is  
 The place divine to English man and  
 child,  
 And pilgrims leave their souls here in  
 a kiss.  
 For Italy's the whole earth's treasury,  
 piled  
 With reveries of gentle ladies, flung  
 Aside, like ravelled silk, from life's worn  
 stuff;  
 With coins of scholars' fancy, which,  
 being rung  
 On work-day counter, still sound silver-  
 proof;  
 In short, with all the dreams of  
 dreamers young,  
 Before their heads have time for slipping  
 off  
 Hope's pillow to the ground. How  
 oft, indeed,  
 We've sent our souls out from the rigid  
 north,  
 On bare white feet which would not  
 print nor bleed,  
 To climb the Alpine passes and look forth,  
 Where booming low the Lombard  
 rivers lead  
 To gardens, vineyards, all a dream is  
 worth,—  
 Sights, thou and I, Love, have seen  
 afterward  
 From Tuscan Bellosguardo, wide awake<sup>1</sup>,  
 When, standing on the actual blessed  
 sward  
 Where Galileo stood at nights to take  
 The vision of the stars, we have found it  
 hard,  
 Gazing upon the earth and heaven, to make  
 A choice of beauty.

Therefore let us all  
 Refreshed in England or in other land,  
 By visions, with their fountain-rise and  
 fall,  
 Of this earth's darling,—we, who under-  
 stand  
 A little how the Tuscan musical

<sup>1</sup> Galileo's villa, close to Florence, is built on  
 an eminence called Bellosguardo.

Vowels do round themselves as if they  
planned

Eternities of separate sweetness,—  
we,

Who loved Sorrento vines in picture-  
book,

Or ere in wine-cup we pledged faith  
or glee.—

Who loved Rome's wolf, with demi-gods  
at suck,

Or ere we loved truth's own divi-  
nity,—

Who loved, in brief, the classic hill and  
brook.

And Ovid's dreaming tales, and  
Petrarch's song,

Or ere we loved Love's self even!—let  
us give

The blessing of our souls, (and wish  
them strong

To bear it to the height where prayers  
arrive,

When faithful spirits pray against a  
wrong;)

To this great cause of southern men,  
who strive

In God's name for man's rights, and  
shall not fail!

Behold, they shall not fail. The shouts  
ascend

Above the shrieks, in Naples, and  
prevail.

Rows of shot corpses, waiting for the  
end

Of burial, seem to smile up straight  
and pale

Into the azure air and apprehend  
That final gun-flash from Palermo's  
coast

Which lightens their apocalypse of  
death.

So let them die! The world shows  
nothing lost;

Therefore, not blood. Above or under-  
neath,

What matter, brothers, if ye keep your  
post

On duty's side! As sword returns to  
sheath,

So dust to grave, but souls find place  
in Heaven.

Heroic daring is the true success,

The eucharistic bread requires no  
leaven;

And though your ends were hopeless,  
we should bless

Your cause as holy. Strive—and,  
having striven,

Take, for God's recompense, that  
righteousness!

## PART II

I wrote a meditation and a dream,  
Hearing a little child sing in the street.

I leant upon his music as a theme,  
Till it gave way beneath my heart's  
full beat,

Which tried at an exultant prophecy  
But dropped before the measure was  
complete—

Alas, for songs and hearts! O Tuscany,  
O Dante's Florence, is the type too  
plain!

Didst thou, too, only sing of liberty,  
As little children take up a high strain  
With unintentioned voices, and break off  
To sleep upon their mothers' knees  
again?

Couldst thou not watch one hour? then,  
sleep enough—

That sleep may hasten manhood, and  
sustain

The faint pale spirit with some muscular  
stuff.

But we, who cannot slumber as thou  
dost,

We thinkers, who have thought for thee  
and failed,

We hoppers, who have hoped for thee  
and lost,

We poets, wandered round by dreams<sup>1</sup>,  
who hailed

From this Atrides' roof (with lintel-  
post

Which still drips blood,—the worse part  
hath prevailed)

The fire-voice of the beacons, to declare  
Troy taken, sorrow ended,—cozened  
through

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Troy taken, sorrow ended,—cozened  
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Troy taken, sorrow ended,—cozened  
through

<sup>1</sup> See the opening passage of the Agamemnon  
of Aeschylus.

A crimson sunset in a misty air,—  
 What now remains for such as we, to do?  
 God's judgements, peradventure, will  
 He bare  
 To the rots of thunder, if we kneel and  
 sue?

From Casa Guidi windows I looked  
 forth,  
 And saw ten thousand eyes of Florentines  
 Flash back the triumph of the Lombard  
 north,—  
 Saw fifty banners, freighted with the  
 signs  
 And exultations of the awakened earth,  
 Float on above the multitude in lines,  
 Straight to the Pitti. So, the vision  
 went.  
 And so, between those populous rough  
 hands  
 Raised in the sun, Duke Leopold out-  
 leant,  
 And took the patriot's oath, which  
 henceforth stands  
 Among the oaths of perjurers, eminent  
 To catch the lightnings ripened for these  
 lands.

Why swear at all, thou false Duke  
 Leopold?  
 What need to swear? What need to  
 boast thy blood  
 Unspoil of Austria, and thy heart  
 unsold  
 Away from Florence? It was understood  
 God made thee not too vigorous or too  
 bold;  
 And men had patience with thy quiet  
 mood,  
 And women, pity, as they saw thee pace  
 Their festive streets with premature grey  
 hairs.  
 We turned the mild dejection of thy face  
 To princely meanings, took thy wrinkling  
 cares  
 For ruffling hopes, and called thee  
 weak, not base.  
 Nay, better light the torches for more  
 prayers  
 And smoke the pale Madonnas at the  
 shrine,  
 Being still 'our poor Grand-duke, our  
 good Grand-duke,

Who cannot help the Austrian in his  
 line,—  
 Than write an oath upon a nation's  
 book  
 For men to spit at with scorn's blurring  
 brine!  
 Who dares forgive what none can over-  
 look?

For me, I do repent me in this dust  
 Of towns and temples, which makes  
 Italy.—  
 I sigh amid the sighs which breathe  
 a gust  
 Of dying century to century  
 Around us on the uneven crater-crust  
 Of these old worlds,—I bow my soul  
 and knee!  
 Absolve me, patriots, of my woman's  
 fault  
 That ever I believed the man was true!—  
 These sceptred strangers shun the  
 common salt,  
 And, therefore, when the general board's  
 in view,  
 And they stand up to carve for blind  
 and halt,  
 The wise suspect the viands which ensue.  
 I much repent that, in this time and  
 place,  
 Where many corpse-lights of experience  
 burn  
 From Caesar's and Lorenzo's festering  
 race,  
 To enlighten groping reasoners, I could  
 learn  
 No better counsel for a simple case,  
 Than to put faith in princes, in my  
 turn.  
 Had all the death-piles of the ancient  
 years  
 Flared up in vain before me? knew I not  
 What stench arises from some purple  
 gears?  
 And how the sceptres witness whence  
 they got  
 Their briar-wood, crackling through  
 the atmosphere's  
 Foul smoke, by princely perjuries, kept  
 hot?  
 Forgive me, ghosts of patriots,—  
 Brutus, thou,  
 Who trailest downhill into life again

Thy blood-weighted cloak, to indict  
me with thy slow  
Reproachful eyes!—for being taught in  
vain  
That, while the illegitimate Caesars  
show  
Of meaner stature than the first full strain  
(Confessed incompetent to conquer  
Gaul),  
They swoon as feebly and cross Rubicons  
As rashly as any Julius of them all!  
Forgive, that I forgot the mind which runs  
Through absolute races, too un-  
sceptical!  
I saw the man among his little sons,  
His lips were warm with kisses while  
he swore,—  
And I, because I am a woman, I,  
Who felt my own child's coming life  
before  
The prescience of my soul, and held  
faith high,—  
I could not bear to think, whoever bore,  
That lips, so warmed, could shape so cold  
a lie.

From Casa Guidi windows I looked out,  
Again looked, and beheld a different sight.  
The Duke had fled before the people's  
shout

'Long live the Duke!' A people, to  
speak right,  
Must speak as soft as courtiers, lest a  
doubt

Should curdle brows of gracious sove-  
reigns, white.

Moreover that same dangerous shout-  
ing meant

Some gratitude for future favours, which  
Were only promised, the Constituent  
Implied, the whole being subject to the  
hitch

In 'motu proprios,' very incident  
To all these Czars, from Paul to Paulo-  
vitch.

Whereat the people rose up in the dust  
Of the ruler's flying feet, and shouted still  
And loudly, only, this time, as was just,  
Not 'Live the Duke,' who had fled, for  
good or ill.

But 'Live the People,' who remained  
and must,

The unrenounced and unrenounceable.

Long live the people! How they  
lived! and boiled

And bubbled in the cauldron of the street.  
How the young blustered, nor the old  
recoiled,—

And what a thunderous stir of tongues  
and feet

Trod flat the palpitating bells, and foiled  
The joy-guns of their echo, shattering it!  
How down they pulled the Duke's  
arms everywhere!

How up they set new café-signs, to show  
Where patriots might sip ices in pure  
air—

(The fresh paint smelling somewhat).  
To and fro

How marched the civic guard, and  
stopped to stare

When boys broke windows in a civic  
glow.

How rebel songs were sung to loyal  
tunes,

And bishops cursed in ecclesiastic metres.  
How all the Circoli grew large as  
moons,

And all the speakers, moonstruck,—  
thankful greeters

Of prospects which struck poor the  
dual boons, . .

A mere free press, and chambers!—  
frank repeaters

Of great Guerazzi's praises. . . .  
'There's a man,

The father of the land!—who, truly  
great,

Takes off that national disgrace and ban,  
The farthing tax upon our Florence-gate,  
And saves Italia as he only can.'

How all the nobles fled, and would not  
wait,

Because they were most noble,—  
which being so,

How liberals vowed to burn their palaces,  
Because free Tuscans were not free  
to go.

How grown men raged at Austria's  
wickedness,

And smoked,—while fifty striplings in  
a row

Marched straight to Piedmont for the  
wrong's redress!

You say we failed in duty, we who  
wore

Black velvet like Italian democrats,  
 Who slashed our sleeves like patriots,  
 nor forswore  
 The true republic in the form of hats?  
 We chased the archbishop from the  
 Duomo door—  
 We chalked the walls with bloody caveats  
 Against all tyrants. If we did not  
 fight  
 Exactly, we fired muskets up the air,  
 To show that victory was ours of  
 right.  
 We met, had free discussion every-  
 where  
 (Except perhaps i' the Chambers) day  
 and night.  
 We proved the poor should be em-  
 ployed, . . . that's fair,—  
 And yet the rich not worked for any-  
 wise,—  
 Pay certified, yet payers abrogated,—  
 Full work secured, yet liabilities  
 To over-work excluded,—not one bated  
 Of all our holidays, that still, at twice  
 Or thrice a-week, are moderately rated.  
 We proved that Austria was dislodged,  
 or would  
 Or should be, and that Tuscany in arms  
 Should, would, dislodge her, ending  
 the old feud;  
 And yet, to leave our piazzas, shops, and  
 farms,  
 For the simple sake of fighting, was  
 not good—  
 We proved that also. 'Did we carry  
 charms  
 Against being killed ourselves, that  
 we should rush  
 On killing others? what! desert here-  
 with  
 Our wives and mothers?—was that  
 duty? tush!'  
 At which we shook the sword within  
 the sheath,  
 Like heroes—only louder; and the  
 flush  
 Ran up the cheek to meet the future  
 wreath.  
 Nay, what we proved, we shouted—  
 how we shouted  
 (Especially the boys did), boldly planting  
 That tree of liberty, whose fruit is  
 doubted,

Because the roots are not of nature's  
 granting.  
 A tree of good and evil!—none, with-  
 out it,  
 Grow gods!—alas, and, with it, men are  
 wanting!  
 O holy knowledge; holy liberty,  
 O holy rights of nations! If I speak  
 These bitter things against the jugglery  
 Of days that in your names proved blind  
 and weak,  
 It is that tears are bitter. When we see  
 The brown skulls grin at death in church-  
 yards bleak,  
 We do not cry, 'This Yorick is too  
 light,'  
 For death grows deathlier with that  
 mouth he makes.  
 So with my mocking. Bitter things  
 I write,  
 Because my soul is bitter for your sakes,  
 O freedom! O my Florence!

Men who might  
 Do greatly in a universe that breaks  
 And burns, must ever *know* before  
 they do.  
 Courage and patience are but sacrifice;  
 And sacrifice is offered for and to  
 Something conceived of. Each man pays  
 a price  
 For what himself counts precious,  
 whether true  
 Or false the appreciation it implies.  
 But here,—no knowledge, no con-  
 ception, nought!  
 Desire was absent, that provides great  
 deeds  
 From out the greatness of prevenient  
 thought.  
 And action, action, like a flame that needs  
 A steady breath and fuel, being caught  
 Up, like a burning reed from other reeds,  
 Flashed in the empty and uncertain air,  
 Then wavered, then went out. Behold,  
 who blames  
 A crooked course, when not a goal is  
 there,  
 To round the fervid striving of the games?  
 An ignorance of means may minister  
 To greatness, but an ignorance of aims  
 Makes it impossible to be great at all.

So, with our Tuscans! Let none dare  
to say,

'Here virtue never can be national.  
Here fortitude can never cut a way  
Between the Austrian muskets, out  
of thrall.'

I tell you rather, that, whoever may  
Discern true ends here, shall grow  
pure enough

To love them, brave enough to strive for  
them,

And strong to reach them, though the  
roads be rough!

That having learnt—by no mere apoph-  
thegm—

Not just the draping of a graceful stuff  
About a statue, brodered at the hem,—

Not just the trilling on an opera stage,  
Of 'libertà' to bravos—(a fair word,

Yet too allied to inarticulate rage  
And breathless sobs, for singing, though  
the chord

Were deeper than they struck it!) but  
the gauge

Of civil wants sustained, and wrongs  
abhorred,—

The serious, sacred meaning and full  
use

Of freedom for a nation,—then, indeed,  
Our Tuscans, underneath the bloody  
dews

Of some new morning, rising up agreed  
And bold, will want no Saxon souls  
or thews,

To sweep their piazzas clear of Austria's  
breed.

Alas, alas! it was not so this time.

Conviction was not, courage failed, and  
truth

Was something to be doubted of. The  
mime

Changed masks, because a mime. The  
tide as smooth

In running in as out, no sense of  
crime

Because no sense of virtue, sudden ruth  
Seized on the people.—They would  
have again

Their good Grand-duke, and leave  
Guerazzi, though

He took that tax from Florence.  
'Much in vain

He takes it from the market-carts, we  
trow,

While urgent that no market-men  
remain,

But all march off and leave the spade  
and plough,

To die among the Lombards. Was  
it thus

The dear paternal Duke did! Live the  
Duke!

At which the joy-bells multitudinous,  
Swept by an opposite wind, as loudly  
shook.

Call back the mild archbishop to his  
house,

To bless the people with his frightened  
look,—

He shall not yet be hanged, you com-  
prehend.

Seize on Guerazzi; guard him in full view,  
Or else we stab him in the back, to end.

Rub out those chalked devices! set up  
new!

The Duke's arms! doff your Phrygian  
caps; and mend

The pavement of the piazzas broke into  
By barren poles of freedom! smooth  
the way

For the ducal carriage, lest his highness  
sigh

'Here trees of liberty grew yesterday.'  
'Long live the Duke!'—How roared the  
cannonry,

How rocked the bell-towers, and  
through thickening spray

Of nosegays, wreaths, and kerchiefs  
tossed on high,

How marched the civic guard, the  
people still

Being good at shouts,—especially the  
boys.

Alas, poor people, of an unfledged will  
Most fitly expressed by such a callow  
voice!

Alas, still poorer Duke, incapable  
Of being worthy even of so much noise!

You think he came back instantly,  
with thanks

And tears in his faint eyes, and hands  
extended

To stretch the franchise through their  
utmost ranks?

That having, like a father, apprehended,  
He came to pardon fatherly those  
pranks

Played out, and now in filial service  
ended!—

That some love-token, like a prince,  
he threw,

To meet the people's love-call, in return?

Well, how he came I will relate to you;  
And if your hearts should burn, why,  
hearts *must* burn,

To make the ashes which things old  
and new

Shall be washed clean in—as this Duke  
will learn.

From Casa Guidi windows, gazing,  
then,

I saw and witness how the Duke came  
back.

The regular tramp of horse and tread  
of men

Did smite the silence like an anvil black  
And sparkless. With her wide eyes  
at full strain,

Our Tuscan nurse exclaimed, 'Alack,  
alack,

Signora! these shall be the Austrians.'  
'Nay,

Be still,' I answered, 'do not wake the  
child!'

—For so, my two-months' baby sleeping  
lay

In milky dreams upon the bed and smiled,  
And I thought, 'he shall sleep on,

while he may,

Through the world's baseness. Not  
being yet defiled,

Why should he be disturbed by what  
is done?'

Then, gazing, I beheld the long-drawn  
street

Live out, from end to end, full in the sun,  
With Austria's thousands. Sword and

bayonet,  
Horse, foot, artillery,—cannons roll-  
ing on,

Like blind slow storm-clouds gestant  
with the heat

Of undeveloped lightnings, each be-  
strode

By a single man, dust-white from head  
to heel,

Indifferent as the dreadful thing he  
rode,

Like a sculptured Fate serene and  
terrible.

As some smooth river which has  
overflowed,

Will slow and silent down its current  
wheel

A loosened forest, all the pines erect,—  
So, swept, in mute significance of storm,

The marshalled thousands,—not an  
eye deflect

To left or right, to catch a novel form  
Of Florence city adorned by architect

And carver, or of Beauties live and  
warm

Scared at the casements!—all, straight-  
forward eyes

And faces, held as steadfast as their  
swords,

And cognizant of acts, not imageries.  
The key, O Tuscans, too well fits the

wards!

Ye asked for mimes,—these bring  
you tragedies;

For purple,—these shall wear it as your  
lords.

Ye played like children,—die like  
innocents.

Ye mimicked lightnings with a torch,—  
the crack

Of the actual bolt, your pastime,  
circumvents.

Ye called up ghosts, believing they were  
slack

To follow any voice from Gilboa's  
tents, . .

Here's Samuel!—and, so, Grand-dukes  
come back!

And yet, they are no prophets though  
they come.

That awful mantle, they are drawing  
close,

Shall be searched, one day, by the  
shafts of Doom

Through double folds now hoodwinking  
the brows.

Resuscitated monarchs disentomb  
Grave-reptiles with them, in their new

life-throes.  
Let such beware. Behold, the people  
waits,

Like God. As He, in His serene of  
 might,

So they, in their endurance of long  
 straits.

Ye stamp no nation out, though day  
 and night

Ye tread them with that absolute heel  
 which grates

And grinds them flat from all attempted  
 height.

You kill worms sooner with a garden-  
 spade

Than you kill peoples : peoples will not  
 die ;

The tail curls stronger when you lop  
 the head ;

They writhe at every wound and  
 multiply,

And shudder into a heap of life that 's  
 made

Thus vital from God's own vitality.

'Tis hard to shrivel back a day of  
 God's

Once fixed for judgement : 'tis as hard to  
 change

The people's, when they rise beneath  
 their loads

And leave them from their backs with  
 violent wrench,

To crush the oppressor !—for that  
 judgement-rod's

The measure of this popular revenge.

Meantime, from Casa Guidi windows,  
 we

Beheld the armament of Austria flow

Into the drowning heart of Tuscany.

And yet none wept, none cursed, or, if  
 'twas so,

They wept and cursed in silence.  
 Silently

Our noisy Tuscans watched the invading  
 foe ;

They had learnt silence. Pressed  
 against the wall,

And grouped upon the church-steps  
 opposite,

A few pale men and women stared at all !  
 God knows what they were feeling,  
 with their white

Constrained faces, they, so prodigal  
 Of cry and gesture when the world goes  
 right,

Or wrong indeed. But here, was  
 depth of wrong,

And here, still water ; they were silent  
 here ;

And through that sentient silence,  
 struck along

That measured tramp from which it  
 stood out clear,

Distinct the sound and silence, like  
 a gong

At midnight, each by the other awfuller,—  
 While every soldier in his cap displayed

A leaf of olive. Dusty, bitter thing !  
 Was such plucked at Novara, is it said !

A cry is up in England, which doth ring  
 The hollow world through, that for  
 ends of trade

And virtue, and God's better wor-  
 shipping,

We henceforth should exalt the name  
 of Peace,

And leave those rusty wars that eat the  
 soul,—

Besides their clippings at our golden  
 fleece.

I, too, have loved peace, and from bole  
 to bole

Of immemorial, undeciduous trees,

Would write, as lovers use, upon a scroll,  
 The holy name of Peace, and set it high

Where none could pluck it down. On  
 trees, I say,—

Not upon gibbets !—With the greenery  
 Of dewy branches and the flowery May,

Sweet mediation betwixt earth and sky

Providing, for the shepherd's holiday.  
 Not upon gibbets !—though the vulture

leaves

The bones to quiet, which he first  
 picked bare.

Not upon dungeons ! though the  
 wretch who grieves

And groans within, less stirs the outer air  
 Than any little field-mouse stirs the

sheaves.

Not upon chain-bolts ! though the slave's  
 despair

Has dulled his helpless, miserable  
 brain,

And left him blank beneath the freeman's  
 whip,

To sing and laugh out idiocies of pain.

Nor yet on starving homes! where  
 many a lip  
 Has sobbed itself asleep through  
 curses vain.  
 I love no peace which is not fellowship,  
 And which includes not mercy. I  
 would have  
 Rather, the raking of the guns across  
 The world, and shrieks against  
 Heaven's architrave;  
 Rather, the struggle in the slippery  
 fosse  
 Of dying men and horses, and the  
 wave  
 Blood-bubbling. . . . Enough said!—  
 by Christ's own cross,  
 And by this faint heart of my woman-  
 hood,  
 Such things are better than a Peace  
 that sits  
 Beside a hearth in self-commended  
 mood,  
 And takes no thought how wind and  
 rain by fits  
 Are howling out of doors against the  
 good  
 Of the poor wanderer. What! your  
 peace admits  
 O! outside anguish while it keeps at  
 home?  
 I loathe to take its name upon my  
 tongue.  
 'Tis nowise peace. 'Tis treason, stiff  
 with doom,—  
 'Tis gagged despair, and inarticulate  
 wrong,  
 Annihilated Poland, stifled Rome,  
 Dazed Naples, Hungary fainting 'neath  
 the thong,  
 And Austria wearing a smooth olive-  
 leaf  
 On her brute forehead, while her hoofs  
 outpress  
 The life from these Italian souls, in  
 brief.  
 O Lord of Peace, who art Lord of  
 Righteousness,  
 Constrain the anguished worlds from  
 sin and grief,  
 Pierce them with conscience, purge them  
 with redress,  
 And give us peace which is no counter-  
 feit!

But wherefore should we look out any  
 more  
 From Casa Guidi windows! Shut them  
 straight,  
 And let us sit down by the folded door,  
 And veil our saddened faces, and, so,  
 wait  
 What next the judgement-heavens make  
 ready for.  
 I have grown too weary of these  
 windows. Sights  
 Come thick enough and clear enough in  
 thought,  
 Without the sunshine; souls have  
 inner lights.  
 And since the Grand-duke has come back  
 and brought  
 This army of the North which thus  
 requites  
 His filial South, we leave him to be  
 taught.  
 His South, too, has learnt something  
 certainly,  
 Whereof the practice will bring profit  
 soon;  
 And peradventure other eyes may see,  
 From Casa Guidi windows, what is done  
 Or undone. Whatsoever deeds they  
 be,  
 Pope Pius will be glorified in none.  
 Record that gain, Mazzini!—it shall  
 top  
 Some heights of sorrow. Peter's rock,  
 so named,  
 Shall lure no vessel any more to drop  
 Among the breakers. Peter's chair is  
 shamed  
 Like any vulgar throne, the nations  
 lop  
 To pieces for their firewood unre-  
 claimed,—  
 And, when it burns too, we shall see  
 as well  
 In Italy as elsewhere. Let it burn.  
 The cross, accounted still adorable,  
 Is Christ's cross only!—if the thief's  
 would earn  
 Some stealthy genuflexions, we rebel;  
 And here the impenitent thief's has had  
 its turn,  
 As God knows; and the people on  
 their knees

Scoff and toss back the croziers, stretched  
like yokes

To press their heads down lower by  
degrees.

So Italy, by means of these last strokes,  
Escapes the danger which preceded  
these,

Of leaving captured hands in cloven  
oaks.—

Of leaving very souls within the buckle  
Whence bodies struggled outward,—of  
supposing

That freemen may, like bondsmen,  
kneel and truckle,

And then stand up as usual, without losing  
An inch of stature.

Those whom she-wolves suckle  
Will bite as wolves do in the grapple—  
closing

Of adverse interests. This, at last, is  
known

(Thank Pius for the lesson), that albeit  
Among the popedom's hundred heads  
of stone

Which blink down on you from the roof's  
retreat

In Siena's tiger-striped cathedral, Joan  
And Borgia 'mid their fellows you may  
greet,

A harlot and a devil,—you will see  
Not a man, still less angel, grandly set

With open soul to render man more  
free.

The fishers are still thinking of the net,  
And, if not thinking of the hook too, we  
Are counted somewhat deeply in their  
debt;

But that's a rare case—so, by hook  
and crook

They take the advantage, agonizing  
Christ

By rustier nails than those of Cedron's  
brook,

I' the people's body very cheaply  
priced,—

And quote high priesthood out of Holy  
book,

While buying death-fields with the  
sacrificed.

Priests, priests,—there's no such  
name!—God's own, except

Ye take most vainly. Through heaven's  
lifted gate

The priestly ephod in sole glory swept,  
When Christ ascended, entered in, and  
sate

(With victor face sublimely overwept)  
At Deity's right hand, to mediate

He alone, He for ever. On his breast  
The Urim and the Thummim, fed with  
fire

From the full Godhead, flicker with  
the unrest

Of human, pitiful heartbeats. Come up  
higher,

All Christians! Levi's tribe is dispos-  
sest.

That solitary alb ye shall admire,  
But not cast lots for. The last chrism,

poured right,  
Was on that Head, and poured for burial,

And not for domination in men's sight.  
What are these churches? The old

temple wall  
Doth overlook them juggling with the  
sleight

Of surplice, candlestick, and altar-pall;  
East church and west church, aye,

north church and south,  
Rome's church and England's,—let them

all repent,  
And make concordats 'twixt their soul  
and mouth.

Succeed St. Paul by working at the tent,  
Become infallible guides by speaking

truth,  
And excommunicate their pride that bent

And cramped the souls of men.

Why, even here,  
Priestcraft burns out, the twined linen

blazes;  
Not, like asbestos, to grow white and

clear,  
But all to perish!—while the fire-smell

raises  
To life some swooning spirits, who,  
last year,

Lost breath and heart in these church-  
stifled places.

Why, almost, through this Pius, we  
believed

The priesthood could be an honest thing,  
he smiled

So saintly while our corn was being  
sheaved  
For his own granaries. Showing now  
defiled  
His hireling hands, a better help's  
achieved  
Than if they blessed us shepherd-like  
and mild.  
False doctrine, strangled by its own  
amen,  
Dies in the throat of all this nation. Who  
Will speak a pope's name, as they rise  
again?  
What woman or what child will count  
him true?  
What dreamer, praise him with the  
voice or pen?  
What man, fight for him?—Pius takes  
his due.

Record that gain, Mazzini!—Yes, but  
first  
Set down thy people's faults;—set down  
the want  
Of soul-conviction; set down aims  
dispersed,  
And incoherent means, and valour scant  
Because of scanty faith, and schisms  
accused,  
That wrench these brother-hearts from  
covenant  
With freedom and each other. —Set  
down this,  
And this, and see to overcome it when  
The seasons bring the fruits thou wilt  
not miss  
If wary. Let no cry of patriot men  
Distract thee from the stern analysis  
Of masses who cry only! keep thy ken  
Clear as thy soul is virtuous. Heroes'  
blood  
Splashed up against thy noble brow in  
Rome,—  
Let such not blind thee to an interlude  
Which was not also holy, yet did come  
'Twixt sacramental actions,—brother-  
hood,  
Despised even there, and something of  
the doom  
Of Remus, in the trenches. Listen  
now—  
Rossi died silent near where Caesar died.  
He did not say, 'My Brutus, is it thou?'

But Italy unquestioned testified,  
'I killed him!—I am Brutus.—I  
avow.  
At which the whole world's laugh of  
scorn replied,  
'A poor maimed copy of Brutus!'  
Too much like,  
Indeed, to be so unlike! too un-  
skilled  
At Philippi and the honest battle-  
pike.  
To be so skilful where a man is killed  
Near Pompey's statue, and the daggers  
strike  
At unawares i' the throat. Was thus  
fulfilled  
An omen once of Michel Angelo?—  
When Marcus Brutus he conceived com-  
plete,  
And strove to hurl him out by blow  
on blow  
Upon the marble, at Art's thunderheat,  
Till haply (some pre-shadow rising  
slow,  
Of what his Italy would fancy meet  
To be called BRUTUS) straight his  
plastic hand  
Fell back before his prophet-soul, and  
left  
A fragment, a maimed Brutus,—but  
more grand  
Than this, so named at Rome, was!  
Let thy weft  
Present one woof and warp, Mazzini!—  
stand  
With no man hankering for a dagger's  
heft,—  
No, not for Italy!—nor stand apart,  
No, not for the republic!—from those  
pure  
Brave men who hold the level of thy  
heart  
In patriot truth, as lover and as doer,  
Albeit they will not follow where thou  
art  
As extreme theorist. Trust and distrust  
fewer;  
And so bind strong and keep unstained  
the cause  
Which (God's sign granted) war-trumps  
newly blown  
Shall yet annunciate to the world's  
applause.

But now, the world is busy; it has grown  
A Fair-going world. Imperial England  
draws

The flowing ends of the earth, from Fez,  
Canton,

Delhi and Stockholm, Athens and  
Madrid,

The Russias and the vast Americas,  
As if a queen drew in her robes amid  
Her golden cincture,—isles, peninsulas,  
Capes, continents, far inland countries  
hid

By jasper-sands and hills of chrysopras,  
All trailing in their splendours through  
the door

Of the gorgeous Crystal Palace. Every  
nation,

To every other nation strange of yore,  
Gives face to face the civic salutation,  
And holds up in a proud right hand  
before

That congress, the best work which she  
can fashion

By her best means. 'These corals,  
will you please

To match against your oaks? They grow  
as fast

Within my wilderness of purple seas.'—

'This diamond stared upon me as I passed  
(As a live god's eye from a marble  
frieze)

Along a dark of diamonds. Is it classed?'—

'I wove these stuffs so subtly that the  
gold

Swims to the surface of the silk like cream,  
And curdles to fair patterns. Ye be-  
hold!'

'These delicate muslins rather seem  
Than be, you think? Nay, touch them  
and be bold,

Though such veiled Chakhi's face in  
Hafiz' dream.'

'These carpets—you walk slow on  
them like kings,

Inaudible like spirits, while your foot  
Dips deep in velvet roses and such  
things.'

'Even Apollonius might commend this  
flute<sup>1</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> Philostratus relates of Apollonius how he objected to the musical instrument of Linus the Rhodian, that it could not enrich or beautify. The history of music in our day would satisfy the philosopher on one point at least.

The music, winding through the stops,  
upsprings

To make the player very rich! com-  
pute.'

'Here's goblet-glass, to take in with  
your wine

The very sun its grapes were ripened  
under!

Drink light and juice together, and  
each fine.'

'This model of a steam-ship moves your  
wonder?

You should behold it crushing down  
the brine,

Like a blind Jove, who feels his way  
with thunder.'

'Here's sculpture! Ah, *we* live too!  
why not throw

Our life into our marbles? Art has place  
For other artists after Angelo.'

'I tried to paint out here a natural face;  
For nature includes Raffael, as we  
know,

Not Raffael nature. Will it help my  
case?'

'Methinks you will not match this  
steel of ours!'

'Nor you this porcelain! One might  
dream the clay

Retained in it the larvae of the flowers,  
They bud so, round the cup, the old  
spring way.'

'Nor you these carven woods, where  
birds in bowers

With twisting snakes and climbing  
cupids, play.'

O Magi of the east and of the west,  
Your incense, gold, and myrrh are ex-  
cellent!—

What gifts for Christ, then, bring ye  
with the rest?

Your hands have worked well. Is your  
courage spent

In handwork only? Have you nothing  
best,

Which generous souls may perfect and  
present,

And He shall thank the givers for!  
no light

Of teaching, liberal nations, for the poor,  
Who sit in darkness when it is not  
night!

No cure for wicked children? Christ,—  
 no cure!  
 No help for women, sobbing out of sight  
 Because men made the laws? no brothel-  
 lure  
 Burnt out by popular lightnings?—  
 Hast thou found  
 No remedy, my England, for such woes?  
 No outlet, Austria, for the scourged  
 and bound,  
 No entrance for the exiled? no repose,  
 Russia, for knouted Poles worked  
 underground,  
 And gentle ladies bleached among the  
 snows?—  
 No mercy for the slave, America?—  
 No hope for Rome, free France, chivalric  
 France?—  
 Alas, great nations have great shames,  
 I say.  
 No pity, O world, no tender utterance  
 Of benediction, and prayers stretched  
 this way  
 For poor Italia, baffled by mischance?—  
 O gracious nations, give some ear to me!  
 You all go to your fair, and I am one  
 Who at the roadside of humanity  
 Beseech your alms,—God's justice to be  
 done.  
 So, prosper!

In the name of Italy,  
 Meantime, her patriot dead have benison.  
 They only have done well,—and,  
 what they did  
 Being perfect, it shall triumph. Let  
 them slumber.  
 No king of Egypt in a pyramid  
 Is safer from oblivion, though he number  
 Full seventy cerements for a coverlid.  
 These Dead be seeds of life, and shall  
 encumber  
 The sad heart of the land, until it loose  
 The clammy clods and let out the spring-  
 growth  
 In beatific green through every bruise.  
 The tyrant should take heed to what he  
 doth,  
 Since every victim-carrion turns to use,  
 And drives a chariot, like a god made  
 wroth,  
 Against each piled injustice. Aye,  
 the least,

Dead for Italia, not in vain has died,  
 Though many vainly, ere life's struggle  
 ceased,  
 To mad dissimilar ends have swerved  
 aside;  
 Each grave her nationality has pieced  
 By its own majestic breadth, and fortified  
 And pinned it deeper to the soil. For-  
 lorn  
 Of thanks, be, therefore, no one of these  
 graves!  
 Not Hers,—who, at her husband's  
 side, in scorn,  
 Outfaced the whistling shot and hissing  
 waves,  
 Until she felt her little babe unborn  
 Recoil, within her, from the violent staves  
 And bloodhounds of the world,—at  
 which, her life  
 Dropt inwards from her eyes and  
 followed it  
 Beyond the hunters. Garibaldi's wife  
 And child died so. And now, the  
 sea-weeds fit  
 Her body, like a proper shroud and  
 coil,  
 And murmurously the ebbing waters grit  
 The little pebbles while she lies in-  
 terred  
 In the sea-sand. Perhaps, ere dying  
 thus,  
 She looked up in his face (which  
 never stirred  
 From its clenched anguish) as to make  
 excuse  
 For leaving him for his, if so she  
 erred.  
 He well remembers that she could not  
 choose.  
 A memorable grave! Another is  
 At Genoa. There, a king may fitly lie,  
 Who, bursting that heroic heart of his  
 At lost Novara, that he could not die  
 (Though thrice into the cannon's eyes  
 for this  
 He plunged his shuddering steed, and  
 felt the sky  
 Reel back between the fire-shocks),  
 stripped away  
 The ancestral ermine ere the smoke had  
 cleared,  
 And, naked to the soul, that none  
 might say

His kingship covered what was base  
and bleared

With treason, went out straight an  
exile, yea,  
An exiled patriot. Let him be revered.

Yea, verily, Charles Albert has died  
well ;

And if he lived not all so, as one spoke,  
The sin pass softly with the passing  
bell.

For he was shriven, I think, in cannon-  
smoke,

And, taking off his crown, made visible  
A hero's forehead. Shaking Austria's  
yoke

He shattered his own hand and heart.  
'So best,'

His last words were upon his lonely bed,  
'I do not end like popes and dukes at  
least—

Thank God for it.' And now that he  
is dead,

Admitting it is proved and manifest  
That he was worthy, with a discrowned  
head,

To measure heights with patriots, let  
them stand

Beside the man in his Oporto shroud,  
And each vouchsafe to take him by  
the hand,

And kiss him on the cheek, and say  
aloud,—

'Thou, too, hast suffered for our  
native land !

My brother, thou art one of us ! be  
proud.'

Still, graves, when Italy is talked upon.  
Still, still, the patriot's tomb, the  
stranger's hate.

Still Niobe ! still fainting in the sun,  
By whose most dazzling arrows violate  
Her beauteous offspring perished !  
has she won

Nothing but garlands for the graves,  
from Fate ?

Nothing but death-songs ?—Yes, be it  
understood

Life throbs in noble Piedmont ! while  
the feet

Of Rome's clay image, dabbled soft  
in blood,

Grow flat with dissolution, and, as meet,  
Will soon be shovelled off like other  
mud,

To leave the passage free in church and  
street.

And I, who first took hope up in this  
song,

Because a child was singing one . . .  
behold,

The hope and omen were not, haply,  
wrong !

Poets are soothsayers still, like those  
of old

Who studied flights of doves,—and  
creatures young

And tender, mighty meanings may un-  
fold.

The sun strikes, through the windows,  
up the floor ;

Standout in it, my own young Florentine,  
Not two years old, and let me see  
thee more !

It grows along thy amber curls, to  
shine

Brighter than elsewhere. Now, look  
straight before,

And fix thy brave blue English eyes on  
mine,

And from my soul, which fronts the  
future so,

With unabashed and unabated gaze,  
Teach me to hope for, what the angels  
know

When they smile clear as thou dost.  
Down God's ways

With just alighted feet, between the  
snow

And snowdrops, where a little lamb may  
graze,

Thou hast no fear, my lamb, about the  
road,

Albeit in our vain-glory we assume  
That, less than we have, thou hast  
learnt of God.

Stand out, my blue-eyed prophet !—thou,  
to whom

The earliest world-day light that ever  
flowed,

Through Casa Guidi windows, chanced  
to come !

Now shake the glittering nimbus of  
thy hair,

And be God's witness that the elemental  
New springs of life are gushing every-  
where

To cleanse the water-courses, and pre-  
vent all

Concrete obstructions which infest the  
air!

That earth's alive, and gentle or ungentle  
Motions within her, signify but  
growth!—

The ground swells greenest o'er the  
labouring moles.

Howe'er the uneasy world is vexed  
and wroth,

Young children, lifted high on parent  
souls,

Look round them with a smile upon  
the mouth,

And take for music every bell that tolls ;

(Who said we should be better if like  
these ?)

But *we* sit murmuring for the future though  
Posterity is smiling on our knees,

Convicting us of folly. Let us go—

We will trust God. The blank inter-  
stices

Men take for ruins, He will build into  
With pillared marbles rare, or knit  
across

With generous arches, till the fane's  
complete.

This world has no perdition, if some  
loss.

Such cheer I gather from thy smiling,  
Sweet!

The self-same cherub-faces which em-  
boss

The Vail, lean inward to the Mercy-seat.

# AURORA LEIGH

A POEM, IN NINE BOOKS.

## DEDICATION TO JOHN KENYON, ESQ.

THE words 'cousin' and 'friend' are constantly recurring in this poem, the last pages of which have been finished under the hospitality of your roof, my own dearest cousin and friend;—cousin and friend, in a sense of less equality and greater disinterestedness than 'Romney's'.

Ending, therefore, and preparing once more to quit England, I venture to leave in your hands this book, the most mature of my works, and the one into which my highest convictions upon Life and Art have

entered; that as, through my various efforts in literature and steps in life, you have believed in me, borne with me, and been generous to me, far beyond the common uses of mere relationship or sympathy of mind, so you may kindly accept, in sight of the public, this poor sign of esteem, gratitude, and affection from

Your unforgetting

E. B. B.

39 DEVONSHIRE PLACE,  
October 17, 1856.

# AURORA LEIGH

## FIRST BOOK

Of writing many books there is no end;  
And I who have written much in prose  
and verse

For others' uses, will write now for  
mine,—

Will write my story for my better self  
As when you paint your portrait for a  
friend,

Who keeps it in a drawer and looks at it  
Long after he has ceased to love you, just  
To hold together what he was and is.

I, writing thus, am still what men call  
young,

I have not so far left the coasts of life  
To travel inland, that I cannot hear  
That murmur of the outer Infinite  
Which unweaned babies smile at in their  
sleep

When wondered at for smiling; not so  
far,

But still I catch my mother at her post  
Beside the nursery door, with finger up,  
'Hush, hush—here's too much noise!'  
while her sweet eyes

Leap forward, taking part against her  
word

In the child's riot. Still I sit and feel  
My father's slow hand, when she had  
left us both,

Stroke out my childish curls across his  
knee,

And hear Assunta's daily jest (she knew  
He liked it better than a better jest)

Inquire how many golden scudi went  
To make such ringlets. O my father's  
hand,

Stroke heavily, heavily the poor hair  
down,

Draw, press the child's head closer to  
thy knee!

I'm still too young, too young, to sit  
alone.

I write. My mother was a Florentine,  
Whose rare blue eyes were shut from  
seeing me

When scarcely I was four years old, my  
life

A poor spark snatched up from a failing  
lamp

Which went out therefore. She was  
weak and frail;

She could not bear the joy of giving life,  
The mother's rapture slew her. If her  
kiss

Had left a longer weight upon my lips  
It might have steadied the uneasy breath,  
And reconciled and fraternized my soul  
With the new order. As it was, indeed,  
I felt a mother-want about the world,  
And still went seeking, like a bleating  
lamb

Left out at night in shutting up the fold,—  
As restless as a nest-deserted bird  
Grown chill through something being  
away, though what

It knows not. I, Aurora Leigh, was born  
To make my father sadder, and myself  
Not overjoyous, truly. Women know  
The way to rear up children (to be just),  
They know a simple, merry, tender  
knack

Of tying sashes, fitting baby-shoes,  
And stringing pretty words that make  
no sense,

And kissing full sense into empty words,  
Which things are corals to cut life upon,  
Although such trifles: children learn by  
such,

Love's holy earnest in a pretty play  
And get not over-early solemnized,  
But seeing, as in a rose-bush, Love's  
Divine

Which burns and hurts not,—not a  
single bloom,—

Become aware and unafraid of Love.  
Such good do mothers. Fathers love as  
well

—Mine did, I know,—but still with  
heavier brains,

And wills more consciously responsible,  
And not as wisely, since less foolishly;  
So mothers have God's licence to be  
missed.

My father was an austere Englishman,  
Who, after a dry lifetime spent at home  
In college-learning, law, and parish talk,  
Was flooded with a passion unaware,  
His whole provisioned and complacent  
past

Drowned out from him that moment.  
As he stood

In Florence, where he had come to spend  
a month

And note the secret of Da Vinci's drains,  
He musing somewhat absently perhaps  
Some English question . . . whether men  
should pay

The unpopular but necessary tax  
With left or right hand—in the alien sun  
In that great square of the Santissima  
There drifted past him (scarcely marked  
enough

To move his comfortable island scorn)  
A train of priestly banners, cross and  
psalm,

The white-veiled rose-crowned maidens  
holding up

Tall tapers, weighty for such wrists,  
aslant

To the blue luminous tremor of the air,  
And letting drop the white wax as they  
went

To eat the bishop's wafer at the church;  
From which long trail of chanting priests  
and girls,

A face flashed like a cymbal on his face  
And shook with silent clangour brain  
and heart,

Transfiguring him to music. Thus, even  
thus,

He too received his sacramental gift  
With eucharistic meanings; for he loved.

And thus beloved, she died. I've heard  
it said

That but to see him in the first surprise  
Of widower and father, nursing me,  
Unmothered little child of four years old,  
His large man's hands afraid to touch  
my curls,

As if the gold would tarnish,—his grave  
lips

Contriving such a miserable smile  
As if he knew needs must, or I should die,  
And yet 'twas hard,—would almost make  
the stones

Cry out for pity. There's a verse he set  
In Santa Croce to her memory,—

'Weep for an infant too young to weep  
much

When death removed this mother'—stops  
the mirth

To-day on women's faces when they  
walk

With rosy children hanging on their  
gowns,  
Under the cloister to escape the sun  
That scorches in the piazza. After which  
He left our Florence and made haste to  
hide  
Himself, his prattling child, and silent  
grief,  
Among the mountains above Pelago;  
Because unmothered babes, he thought,  
had need  
Of mother nature more than others use,  
And Pan's white goats, with udders  
warm and full  
Of mystic contemplations, come to feed  
Poor milkless lips of orphans like his  
own—  
Such scholar scraps he talked, I've heard  
from friends,  
For even prosaic men who wear grief  
long  
Will get to wear it as a hat aside  
With a flower stuck in't. Father, then,  
and child,  
We lived among the mountains many  
years,  
God's silence on the outside of the house,  
And we who did not speak too loud  
within,  
And old Assunta to make up the fire,  
Crossing herself whenever a sudden  
flame  
Which lightened from the firewood, made  
alive  
That picture of my mother on the wall.  
The painter drew it after she was dead,  
And when the face was finished, throat  
and hands,  
Her cameriera carried him, in hate  
Of the English-fashioned shroud, the last  
brocade  
She dressed in at the Pitti; 'he should  
paint  
No sadder thing than that,' she swore,  
'to wrong  
Her poor signora. Therefore very  
strange  
The effect was. I, a little child, would  
crouch  
For hours upon the floor with knees  
drawn up,  
And gaze across them, half in terror, half

In adoration, at the picture there,—  
That swan-like supernatural white life  
Just sailing upward from the red stiff silk  
Which seemed to have no part in it nor  
power  
To keep it from quite breaking out of  
bounds.  
For hours I sat and stared. Assunta's  
awe  
And my poor father's melancholy eyes  
Still pointed that way. That way went  
my thoughts  
When wandering beyond sight. And  
as I grew  
In years, I mixed, confused, uncon-  
sciously,  
Whatever I last read or heard or dreamed,  
Abhorrent, admirable, beautiful,  
Pathetical, or ghastly, or grotesque,  
With still that face . . . which did not  
therefore change,  
But kept the mystic level of all forms,  
Hates, fears, and admirations, was by  
turns  
Ghost, fiend, and angel, fairy, witch,  
and sprite,  
A dauntless Muse who eyes a dreadful  
Fate,  
A loving Psyche who loses sight of Love,  
A still Medusa with mild milky brows  
All curdled and all clothed upon with  
snakes  
Whose slime falls fast as sweat will; or  
anon  
Our Lady of the Passion, stabbed with  
swords  
Where the Babe sucked; Or Lamia in  
her first  
Moonlighted pallor, ere she shrunk and  
blinked  
And shuddering wriggled down to the  
unclean;  
Or my own mother, leaving her last smile  
In her last kiss upon the baby-mouth—  
My father pushed down on the bed for  
that,—  
Or my dead mother, without smile or  
kiss,  
Buried at Florence. All which images,  
Concentrated on the picture, glassed them-  
selves  
Before my meditative childhood, as  
The incoherencies of change and death

Are represented fully, mixed and merged,  
In the smooth fair mystery of perpetual  
Life.

And while I stared away my childish  
wits

Upon my mother's picture (ah, poor  
child !)

My father, who through love had suddenly  
Thrown off the old conventions, broken  
loose

From chin-bands of the soul, like Lazarus,  
Yet had no time to learn to talk and walk  
Or grow anew familiar with the sun,—  
Who had reached to freedom, not to  
action, lived,

But lived as one entranced, with thoughts,  
not aims,—

Whom love had unmade from a common  
man

But not completed to an uncommon  
man,—

My father taught me what he had learnt  
the best

Before he died and left me,—grief and  
love.

And, seeing we had books among the  
hills,

Strong words of counselling souls con-  
federate —

With vocal pines and waters,—out of  
books

He taught me all the ignorance of men,  
And how God laughs in heaven when any  
man

Says ' Here I'm learned ; this, I under-  
stand ;

In that, I am never caught at fault or  
doubt.'

He sent the schools to school, demon-  
strating

A fool will pass for such through one  
mistake,

While a philosopher will pass for such,  
Through said mistakes being ventured  
in the gross

And heaped up to a system.

I am like,  
They tell me, my dear father. Broader  
brows

Howbeit, upon a slenderer undergrowth  
Of delicate features,—paler, near as  
grave ;

But then my mother's smile breaks up the  
whole,

And makes it better sometimes than itself.

So, nine full years, our days were hid  
with God

Among His mountains : I was just thir-  
teen,

Still growing like the plants from unseen  
roots

In tongue-tied Springs,—and suddenly  
awoke

To full life and life's needs and agonies  
With an intense, strong, struggling  
heart beside

A stone-dead father. Life, struck sharp  
on death,

Makes awful lightning. His last word  
was, ' Love'—

' Love, my child, love, love !'—(then he  
had done with grief)

' Love, my child.' Ere I answered he  
was gone,

And none was left to love in all the world.

There, ended childhood. What suc-  
ceeded next

I recollect as, after fevers, men  
Thread back the passage of delirium,

Missing the turn still, baffled by the door ;  
Smooth endless days, notched here and  
there with knives ;

A weary, wormy darkness, spurred i'  
the flank

With flame, that it should eat and end  
itself

Like some tormented scorpion. Then  
at last

I do remember clearly, how there came  
A stranger with authority, not right

(I thought not), who commanded, caught  
me up

From old Assunta's neck ; how, with a  
shriek,

She let me go,—while I, with ears too full  
Of my father's silence to shriek back  
a word,

In all a child's astonishment at grief  
Stared at the wharf-edge where she  
stood and moaned,

My poor Assunta, where she stood and  
moaned !

The white walls, the blue hills, my Italy,

Drawn backward from the shuddering  
steamer-deck,  
Like one in anger drawing back her  
skirts  
Which suppliants catch at. Then the  
bitter sea  
Inexorably pushed between us both,  
And sweeping up the ship with my  
despair  
Threw us out as a pasture to the stars.

Ten nights and days we voyaged on the  
deep ;  
Ten nights and days without the common  
face

Of any day or night ; the moon and sun  
Cut off from the green reconciling earth,  
To starve into a blind ferocity  
And glare unnatural ; the very sky  
(Dropping its bell-net down upon the sea  
As if no human heart should 'scape alive,)  
Bedraggled with the desolating salt,  
Until it seemed no more that holy heaven  
To which my father went. All new  
and strange ;  
The universe turned stranger, for a child.

Then, land !—then, England ! oh, the  
frosty cliffs  
Looked cold upon me. Could I find a  
home  
Among those mean red houses through  
the fog ?  
And when I heard my father's language  
first

From alien lips which had no kiss for mine  
I wept aloud, then laughed, then wept,  
then wept,  
And some one near me said the child  
was mad  
Through much sea-sickness. The train  
swept us on.

Was this my father's England ? the great  
isle ?

The ground seemed cut up from the  
fellowship

Of verdure, field from field, as man from  
man ;

The skies themselves looked low and  
positive,

As almost you could touch them with  
a hand,

And dared to do it they were so far off

From God's celestial crystals ; all things  
blurred

And dull and vague. Did Shakespeare  
and his mates

Absorb the light here ?—not a hill or stone  
With heart to strike a radiant colour up  
Or active outline on the indifferent air.

I think I see my father's sister stand  
Upon the hall-step of her country-house  
To give me welcome. She stood straight  
and calm,

Her somewhat narrow forehead braided  
tight

As if for taming accidental thoughts  
From possible pulses ; brown hair  
pricked with grey

By frigid use of life (she was not old  
Although my father's elder by a year),  
A nose drawn sharply, yet in delicate  
lines ;

A close mild mouth, a little soured about  
The ends, through speaking unrequited  
loves

Or peradventure niggardly half-truths ;  
Eyes of no colour,—once they might  
have smiled,

But never, never have forgot themselves  
In smiling ; cheeks, in which was yet  
a rose

Of perished summers, like a rose in a  
book,

Kept more for ruth than pleasure,—if  
past bloom,

Past fading also.

She had lived, we'll say,  
A harmless life, she called a virtuous life,  
A quiet life, which was not life at all  
(But that, she had not lived enough to  
know),

Between the vicar and the county squires,  
The lord-lieutenant looking down some-  
times

From the empyrean to assure their souls  
Against chance-vulgarisms, and, in the  
abyss

The apothecary, looked on once a year  
To prove their soundness of humility.

The poor-club exercised her Christian  
gifts

Of knitting stockings, stitching petticoats,  
Because we are of one flesh after all

And need one flannel (with a proper sense

Of difference in the quality)—and still  
The book-club, guarded from your  
modern trick

Of shaking dangerous questions from the  
crease,

Preserved her intellectual. She had lived  
A sort of cage-bird life, born in a cage,  
Accounting that to leap from perch to  
perch

Was act and joy enough for any bird.  
Dear heaven, how silly are the things  
that live

In thickets, and eat berries!

I, alas,

A wild bird scarcely fledged, was brought  
to her cage,

And she was there to meet me. Very kind.  
Bring the clean water, give out the fresh  
seed.

She stood upon the steps to welcome me,  
Calm, in black garb. I clung about her  
neck,—

Young babes, who catch at every shred  
of wool

To draw the new light closer, catch and  
cling

Less blindly. In my ears, my father's  
word

Hummed ignorantly, as the sea in shells,  
'Love, love, my child.' She, black there  
with my grief,

Might feel my love—she was his sister  
once,

I clung to her. A moment she seemed  
moved,

Kissed me with cold lips, suffered me  
to cling,

And drew me feebly through the hall into  
The room she sat in.

There, with some strange spasm  
Of pain and passion, she wrung loose  
my hands

Imperiously, and held me at arm's length,  
And with two grey-steel naked-bladed  
eyes

Searched through my face,—aye, stabbed  
it through and through,

Through brows and cheeks and chin, as  
if to find

A wicked murderer in my innocent face,  
if not here, there perhaps. Then,  
drawing breath,

She struggled for her ordinary calm  
And missed it rather,—told me not to  
shrink,

As if she had told me not to lie or swear,—  
'She loved my father and would love  
me too

As long as I deserved it.' Very kind.

I understood her meaning afterward;  
She thought to find my mother in my face,  
And questioned it for that. For she,  
my aunt,

Had loved my father truly, as she could,  
And hated, with the gall of gentle souls,  
My Tuscan mother who had fooled away  
A wise man from wise courses, a good man  
From obvious duties, and, depriving her,  
His sister, of the household precedence,  
Had wronged his tenants, robbed his  
native land,

And made him mad, alike by life and death,  
In love and sorrow. She had pored for  
years

What sort of woman could be suitable  
To her sort of hate, to entertain it with,  
And so, her very curiosity

Became hate too, and all the idealism  
She ever used in life, was used for hate,  
Till hate, so nourished, did exceed at last

The love from which it grew, in strength  
and heat,

And wrinkled her smooth conscience  
with a sense

Of disputable virtue (say not, sin)  
When Christian doctrine was enforced  
at church.

And thus my father's sister was to me  
My mother's hater. From that day, she did  
Her duty to me (I appreciate it

In her own word as spoken to herself),  
Her duty, in large measure, well-pressed  
out,

But measured always. She was generous,  
bland,

More courteous than was tender, gave  
me still

The first place,—as if fearful that God's  
saints

Would look down suddenly and say,  
'Herein

You missed a point, I think, through  
lack of love.'

Alas, a mother never is afraid  
Of speaking angrily to any child,  
Since love, she knows, is justified of love.

And I, I was a good child on the whole,  
A meek and manageable child. Why not?  
I did not live, to have the faults of life:  
There seemed more true life in my  
father's grave  
Than in all England. Since *that* threw  
me off

Who fain would cleave (his latest will,  
they say,  
Consigned me to his land), I only thought  
Of lying quiet there where I was thrown  
Like sea-weed on the rocks, and suffer-  
ing her

To prick me to a pattern with her pin  
Fibre from fibre, delicate leaf from leaf,  
And dry out from my drowned anatomy  
The last sea-salt left in me.

So it was.

I broke the copious curls upon my head  
In braids, because she liked smooth-  
ordered hair.

I left off saying my sweet Tuscan words  
Which still at any stirring of the heart  
Came up to float across the English phrase  
As lilies (*Bene* or *Che c'è*), because  
She liked my father's child to speak his  
tongue.

I learnt the collects and the catechism,  
The creeds, from Athanasius back to Nice,  
The Articles, the Tracts *against* the times  
(By no means Buonaventure's 'Prick of  
Love'),

And various popular synopses of  
Inhuman doctrines never taught by John,  
Because she liked instructed piety.

I learnt my complement of classic French  
(Kept pure of Balzac and neologism)

And German also, since she liked a range  
Of liberal education,—tongues, not books.  
I learnt a little algebra, a little

Of the mathematics,—brushed with  
extreme flounce

The circle of the sciences, because  
She disliked women who are frivolous.

I learnt the royal genealogies  
Of Oviedo, the internal laws  
Of the Burmese empire,—by how many  
feet

Mount Chimborazo outsoars Teneriffe,

What navigable river joins itself  
To Lara, and what census of the year  
five

Was taken at Klagenfurt,—because she  
liked

A general insight into useful facts.  
I learnt much music,—such as would  
have been

As quite impossible in Johnson's day  
As still it might be wished—fine sleights  
of hand

And unimagined fingering, shuffling off  
The hearer's soul through hurricanes of  
notes

To a noisy Tophet; and I drew . . .  
costumes

From French engravings, nereids neatly  
draped,

(With smirks of simmering godship)—  
I washed in

Landscapes from nature (rather say,  
washed out).

I danced the polka and Cellarius,  
Spun glass, stuffed birds, and modelled  
flowers in wax,

Because she liked accomplishments in  
girls.

I read a score of books on womanhood  
To prove, if women do not think at all,  
They may teach thinking (to a maiden-  
aunt

Or else the author),—books that boldly  
assert

Their right of comprehending husband's  
talk

When not too deep, and even of answering  
With pretty 'may it please you,' or 'so  
it is,'—

Their rapid insight and fine aptitude,  
Particular worth and general missionari-  
ness,

As long as they keep quiet by the fire  
And never say 'no' when the world  
says 'aye,'

For that is fatal,—their angelic reach  
Of virtue, chiefly used to sit and darn,  
And fatten household sinners,—their, in  
brief,

Potential faculty in everything  
Of abdicating power in it: she owned  
She liked a woman to be womanly,  
And English women, she thanked God  
and sighed

(Some people always sigh in thanking God),

Were models to the universe. And last I learnt cross-stitch, because she did not like

To see me wear the night with empty hands

A-doing nothing. So, my shepherdess Was something after all (the pastoral saints

Be praised for 't), leaning lovelorn with pink eyes

To match her shoes, when I mistook the silks ;

Her head uncrushed by that round weight of hat

So strangely similar to the tortoise-shell Which slew the tragic poet.

By the way, The works of women are symbolical.

We sew, sew, prick our fingers, dull our sight,

Producing what? A pair of slippers, sir, To put on when you're weary—or a stool

To stumble over and vex you . . 'curse that stool !'

Or else at best, a cushion, where you lean And sleep, and dream of something we are not

But would be for your sake. Alas, alas! This hurts most, this—that, after all, we are paid

The worth of our work, perhaps.

In looking down Those years of education (to return)

I wonder if Brinvilliers suffered more In the water-torture, . . flood succeeding flood

To drench the incapable throat and split the veins.

Than I did. Certain of your feebler souls Go out in such a process ; many pine—

To a sick, inodorous light ; my own endured :

I had relations in the Unseen, and drew The elemental nutriment and heat

From nature, as earth feels the sun at nights,

Or as a babe sucks surely in the dark. I kept the life thrust on me, on the outside

Of the inner life with all its ample room For heart and lungs, for will and intellect,

Inviolable by conventions. God,

I thank thee for that grace of thine !

At first I felt no life which was not patience,—did The thing she bade me, without heed to a thing

Beyond it, sate in just the chairs she placed, With back against the window, to exclude The sight of the great lime-tree on the lawn,

Which seemed to have come on purpose from the woods

To bring the house a message,—aye, and walked

Demurely in her carpeted low rooms, As if I should not, hearkening my own steps,

Misdoubt I was alive. I read her books, Was civil to her cousin, Romney Leigh,

Gave ear to her vicar, tea to her visitors, And heard them whisper, when I changed a cup—

(I blushed for joy at that),—'The Italian child,

For all her blue eyes and her quiet ways, Thrives ill in England : she is paler yet

Than when we came the last time ; she will die.'

'Will die.' My cousin, Romney Leigh, blushed too,

With sudden anger, and approaching me Said low between his teeth, 'You're wicked now !

You wish to die and leave the world a-dusk

For others, with your naughty light blown out ?'

I looked into his face defyingly ; He might have known that, being what I was,

'Twas natural to like to get away As far as dead folk can : and then indeed

Some people make no trouble when they die.

He turned and went abruptly, slammed the door

And shut his dog out.

Romney, Romney Leigh.

I have not named my cousin hitherto, And yet I used him as a sort of friend ;

My elder by few years, but cold and shy And absent . . tender, when he thought of it,

Which scarcely was imperative, grave  
betimes,

As well as early master of Leigh Hall,  
Whereof the nightmare sate upon his  
youth

Repressing all its seasonable delights  
And agonizing with a ghastly sense  
Of universal hideous want and wrong

To incriminate possession. When he  
came

From college to the country, very oft  
He crossed the hill on visits to my aunt,  
With gifts of blue grapes from the hot-  
houses,

A book in one hand,—mere statistics (if  
I chanced to lift the cover), count of all  
The goats whose beards grow sprouting  
down toward hell

Against God's separative judgement-hour.  
And she, she almost loved him,—even  
allowed

That sometimes he should seem to sigh  
my way ;

It made him easier to be pitiful,  
And sighing was his gift. So, undisturbed  
At whiles she let him shut my music up  
And push my needles down, and lead  
me out

To see in that south angle of the house  
The figs grow black as if by a Tuscan rock,  
On some light pretext. She would  
turn her head

At other moments, go to fetch a thing,  
And leave me breath enough to speak  
with him,

For his sake ; it was simple.

Sometimes too  
He would have saved me utterly, it  
seemed,

He stood and looked so.

Once, he stood so near  
He dropped a sudden hand upon my head  
Bent down on woman's work, as soft  
as rain—

But then I rose and shook it off as fire,  
The stranger's touch that took my  
father's place

Yet dared seem soft.

I used him for a friend  
Before I ever knew him for a friend.

'Twas better, 'twas worse also, afterward :  
We came so close, we saw our differences  
Too intimately. Always Romney Leigh

Was looking for the worms, I for the  
gods.

A godlike nature his ; the gods look down,  
Incurious of themselves ; and certainly  
'Tis well I should remember, how, those  
days,

I was a worm too and he looked on me.

A little by his act perhaps, yet more  
By something in me, surely not my will,  
I did not die. But slowly, as one in  
swoon,

To whom life creeps back in the form of  
death,

With a sense of separation, a blind pain  
Of blank obstruction, and a roar i' the ears  
Of visionary chariots which retreat  
As earth grows clearer . . slowly, by  
degrees,

I woke, rose up . . where was I ! in the  
world ;

For uses therefore I must count worth  
while.

I had a little chamber in the house,  
As green as any privet-hedge a bird  
Might choose to build in, though the  
nest itself

Could show but dead-brown sticks and  
straws ; the walls

Were green, the carpet was pure green,  
the straight

Small bed was curtained greenly, and  
the folds

Hung green about the window which  
let in

The outdoor world with all its greenery.  
You could not push your head out and  
escape

A dash of dawn-dew from the honey-  
suckle,

But so you were baptized into the grace  
And privilege of seeing. . .

First, the lime  
(I had enough there, of the lime, be sure,—  
My morning-dream was often hummed  
away

By the bees in it), past the lime, the  
lawn,

Which, after sweeping broadly round  
the house,

Went trickling through the shrubberies  
in a stream

Of tender turf, and wore and lost itself  
Among the acacias, over which you saw  
The irregular line of elms by the deep lane  
Which stopped the grounds and dammed  
the overflow

Of arbutus and laurel. Out of sight  
The lane was ; sunk so deep, no foreign  
tramp

Nor drover of wild ponies out of Wales  
Could guess if lady's hall or tenant's  
lodge

Dispensed such odours,—though his  
stick well-crooked

Might reach the lowest trail of blossom-  
ing brier

Which dipped upon the wall. Behind  
the elms,

And through their tops, you saw the  
folded hills

Striped up and down with hedges  
(burly oaks

Projecting from the line to show them-  
selves),

Through which my cousin Romney's  
chimneys smoked

As still as when a silent mouth in frost  
Breathes, showing where the woodlands  
hid Leigh Hall ;

While, far above, a jut of table-land,  
A promontory without water, stretch-  
ed,—

You could not catch it if the days were  
thick,

Or took it for a cloud ; but, otherwise,  
The vigorous sun would catch it up at eve  
And use it for an anvil till he had filled  
The shelves of heaven with burning  
thunderbolts,

Protesting against night and darkness :—  
then,

When all his setting trouble was resolved  
To a trance of passive glory, you might see

In apparition on the golden sky  
(Alas, my Giotto's background!) the  
sheep run

Along the fine clear outline, small as mice  
That run along a witch's scarlet thread.

Not a grand nature. Not my chestnut-  
woods

Of Vallombrosa, cleaving by the spurs  
To the precipices. Not my headlong leaps  
Of waters, that cry out for joy or fear

In leaping through the palpitating pines,  
Like a white soul tossed out to eternity  
With thrills of time upon it. Not indeed  
My multitudinous mountains, sitting in  
The magic circle, with the mutual touch  
Electric, panting from their full deep  
hearts

Beneath the influent heavens, and  
waiting for  
Communion and commission. Italy  
Is one thing, England one.

On English ground  
You understand the letter,—ere the fall  
How Adam lived in a garden. All the  
fields

Are tied up fast with hedges, nosegay-  
like ;

The hills are crumpled plains, the plains  
parterres,

The trees, round, woolly, ready to be  
clipped,

And if you seek for any wilderness  
You find, at best, a park. A nature tamed

And grown domestic like a barn-door  
fowl,

Which does not awe you with its claws  
and beak

Nor tempt you to an eyrie too high up,  
But which, in cackling, sets you

thinking of  
Your eggs to-morrow at breakfast, in  
the pause

Of finer meditation.

Rather say,  
A sweet familiar nature, stealing in  
As a dog might, or child, to touch your  
hand

Or pluck your gown, and humbly mind  
you so

Of presence and affection, excellent  
For inner uses, from the things without.

I could not be unthankful, I who was  
Entreated thus and holpen. In the room

I speak of, ere the house was well awake,  
And also after it was well asleep,

I sat alone, and drew the blessing in  
Of all that nature. With a gradual step,

A stir among the leaves, a breath, a ray,  
It came in softly, while the angels made

A place for it beside me. The moon came,  
And swept my chamber clean of foolish

thoughts.

The sun came, saying, 'Shall I lift this  
light  
Against the lime-tree, and you will not  
look!

I make the birds sing—listen! but, for  
you,  
God never hears your voice, excepting  
when  
You lie upon the bed at nights and weep.'

Then, something moved me. Then,  
I wakened up

More slowly than I verily write now,  
But wholly, at last, I wakened, opened  
wide

The window and my soul, and let the airs  
And outdoor sights sweep gradual  
gospels in,

Regenerating what I was. O Life,  
How oft we throw it off and think,—  
'Enough,

Enough of life in so much!—here's a  
cause

For rupture;—herein we must break  
with Life,

Or be ourselves unworthy; here we are  
wronged,

Maimed, spoiled for aspiration: farewell  
Life!

And so, as forward babes, we hide our eyes  
And think all ended.—Then, Life calls  
to us

In some transformed, apocalyptic voice,  
Above us, or below us, or around:

Perhaps we name it Nature's voice, or  
Love's,

Tricking ourselves, because we are  
more ashamed

To own our compensations than our  
griefs:

Still, Life's voice!—still, we make our  
peace with Life.

And I, so young then, was not sullen.  
Soon

I used to get up early, just to sit  
And watch the morning quicken in the  
grey,

And hear the silence open like a flower  
Leaf after leaf,—and stroke with listless  
hand

The woodbine through the window, till  
at last

I came to do it with a sort of love,  
At foolish unaware: whereat I smiled,—  
A melancholy smile, to catch myself  
Smiling for joy.

Capacity for joy  
Admits temptation. It seemed, next,  
worth while

To dodge the sharp sword set against  
my life;

To slip downstairs through all the  
sleepy house,

As mute as any dream there, and escape  
As a soul from the body, out of doors,

Glide through the shrubberies, drop  
into the lane.

And wander on the hills an hour or two,  
Then back again before the house should  
stir.

Or else I sate on in my chamber green,  
And lived my life, and thought my  
thoughts, and prayed

[My prayers without the vicar; read my  
books,

Without considering whether they were  
fit

To do me good. Mark, there. We  
get no good

By being ungenerous, even to a book,  
And calculating profits,—so much help  
By so much reading. It is rather when

We gloriously forget ourselves and  
plunge

Soul-forward, headlong, into a book's  
profound,

Impassioned for its beauty and salt of  
truth—

'Tis then we get the right good from  
a book.

I read much. What my father taught  
before

From many a volume, Love re-empha-  
sized

Upon the self-same pages: Theophrast  
Grew tender with the memory of his eyes,

And Aelian made mine wet. The trick  
of Greek

And Latin, he had taught me, as he would  
Have taught me wrestling or the game  
of fives

If such he had known,—most like a  
shipwrecked man

Who heaps his single platter with goats'  
cheese

And scarlet berries ; or like any man  
Who loves but one, and so gives all at once,  
Because he has it, rather than because  
He counts it worthy. Thus, my father  
gave ;

And thus, as did the women formerly  
By young Achilles, when they pinned  
a veil

Across the boy's audacious front, and  
swept

With tuneful laughs the silver-fretted  
rocks,

He wrapt his little daughter in his large  
Man's doublet, careless did it fit or no.

But, after I had read for memory,  
I read for hope. The path my father's foot  
Had trod me out (which suddenly broke  
off

What time he dropped the wallet of the  
flesh

And passed) alone I carried on, and set  
My child-heart 'gainst the thorny under-  
wood,

To reach the grassy shelter of the trees.  
Ah babe ! the wood, without a brother-  
babe !

My own self-pity, like the red-breast bird,  
Flies back to cover all that past with  
leaves.

Sublimest danger, over which none  
weeps,

When any young wayfaring soul goes  
forth

Alone, unconscious of the perilous road,  
The day-sun dazzling in his limpid eyes,  
To thrust his own way, he an alien,  
through

The world of books ! Ah, you !—you  
think it fine,

You clap hands—'A fair day !'—you  
cheer him on,

As if the worst, could happen, were to rest  
Too long beside a fountain. Yet, behold,  
Behold !—the world of books is still the  
world,

\*And worldlings in it are less merciful  
And more puissant. For the wicked there  
Are winged like angels ; every knife  
that strikes

Is edged from elemental fire to assail  
A spiritual life ; the beautiful seems right  
By force of beauty, and the feeble wrong  
Because of weakness ; power is justified  
Though armed against Saint Michael ;  
many a crown

Covers bald foreheads. In the book-  
world, true,

There's no lack, neither, of God's saints  
and kings,

That shake the ashes of the grave aside  
From their calm locks and undiscomfited  
Look steadfast truths against Time's  
changing mask.

True, many a prophet teaches in the  
roads ;

True, many a seer pulls down the  
flaming heavens

Upon his own head in strong martyrdom  
In order to light men a moment's space.  
But stay !—who judges ?—who dis-  
tinguishes

'Twixt Saul and Nahash justly, at first  
sight,

And leaves king Saul precisely at the sin,  
To serve king David ? who discerns at  
once

The sound of the trumpets, when the  
trumpets blow

For Alaric as well as Charlemagne ?  
Who judges wizards, and can tell true  
seers

From conjurors ? the child, there ?  
Would you leave

That child to wander in a battle-field  
And push his innocent smile against the  
guns ;

Or even in a catacomb,—his torch  
Grown ragged in the fluttering air, and  
all

The dark-a-mutter round him ? not a child.

I read books bad and good—some bad  
and good

At once (good aims not always make  
good books :

Well-tempered spades turn up ill-  
smelling soils

In digging vineyards even) ; books that  
prove

God's being so definitely, that man's  
doubt

Grows self-defined the other side the line,

Made atheist by suggestion; moral books,  
Exasperating to licence; genial books,  
Discounting from the human dignity;  
And merry books, which set you weep-  
ing when

The sun shines,—aye, and melancholy  
books,  
Which make you laugh that any one  
should weep  
In this disjointed life for one wrong more.

The world of books is still the world,  
I write,

And both worlds have God's providence,  
thank God,

To keep and hearten: with some struggle,  
indeed,

Among the breakers, some hard swim-  
ming through

The deeps—I lost breath in my soul  
sometimes

And cried, 'God save me if there's any  
God,'

But, even so, God saved me; and, being  
dashed

From error on to error, every turn  
Still brought me nearer to the central  
truth.

I thought so. All this anguish in the  
thick

Of men's opinions . . . press and counter-  
press,

Now up, now down, now underfoot, and  
now

Emergent . . . all the best of it, perhaps,  
But throws you back upon a noble trust

And use of your own instinct,—merely  
proves

Pure reason stronger than bare inference  
At strongest. Try it,—fix against heaven's  
wall

The scaling-ladders of school logic—  
mount

Step by step!—sight goes faster; that  
still ray

Which strikes out from you, how, you  
cannot tell.

And why, you know not (did you elim-  
inate,

That such as you indeed should analyse?),  
Goes straight and fast as light, and high  
as God.

The cygnet finds the water, but the man  
Is born in ignorance of his element  
And feels out blind at first, disorganized  
By sin in the blood,—his spirit-insight  
dulled

And crossed by his sensations. Presently  
He feels it quicken in the dark sometimes,  
When, mark, be reverent, be obedient,  
For such dumb motions of imperfect life  
Are oracles of vital Deity

Attesting the Hereafter. Let who says  
'The soul's a clean white paper,' rather

say,  
A palimpsest, a prophet's holograph  
Defiled, erased and covered by a monk's,—

The apocalypse, by a Longus! poring on  
Which obscene text, we may discern  
perhaps

Some fair, fine trace of what was written  
once,

Some upstroke of an alpha and omega  
Expressing the old scripture.

Books, books, books!

I had found the secret of a garret-room  
Piled high with cases in my father's name,  
Piled high, packed large,—where, creep-  
ing in and out

Among the giant fossils of my past,  
Like some small nimble mouse between  
the ribs

Of a mastodon, I nibbled here and there  
At this or that box, pulling through the  
gap,

In heats of terror, haste, victorious joy,  
The first book first. And how I felt it beat  
Under my pillow, in the morning's dark,  
An hour before the sun would let me read!

My books! At last because the time was  
ripe,

I chanced upon the poets.

As the earth  
Plunges in fury, when the internal fires  
Have reached and pricked her heart, and,  
throwing flat

The marts and temples, the triumphal  
gates

And towers of observation, clears herself  
To elemental freedom—thus, my soul,  
At poetry's divine first finger-touch,  
Let go conventions and sprang up sur-  
prised,

Convicted of the great eternities  
Before two worlds.

What's this, Aurora Leigh,  
You write so of the poets, and not laugh?  
Those virtuous liars, dreamers after dark,  
Exaggerators of the sun and moon,  
And soothsayers in a tea-cup?

I write so  
Of the only truth-tellers now left to God,  
The only speakers of essential truth,  
Opposed to relative, comparative,  
And temporal truths; the only holders by  
His sun-skirts, through conventional  
grey glooms;

The only teachers who instruct mankind  
From just a shadow on a chancel-wall  
To find man's veritable stature out  
Erect, sublime,—the measure of a man,  
And that's the measure of an angel, says  
The apostle. Aye, and while your com-  
mon men

Lay telegraphs, gauge railroads, reign,  
reap, dine,

And dust the flaunty carpets of the world  
For kings to walk on, or our president,  
The poet suddenly will catch them up  
With his voice like a thunder,—‘This is  
soul,

This is life, this word is being said in  
heaven,

Here's God down on us! what are you  
about?’

How all those workers start amid their  
work,

Look round, look up, and feel, a mo-  
ment's space,

That carpet-dusting, though a pretty  
trade,

Is not the imperative labour after all.

My own best poets, am I one with you,  
That thus I love you,—or but one  
through love!

Does all this smell of thyme about my feet  
Conclude my visit to your holy hill  
In personal presence, or but testify  
The rustling of your vesture through my  
dreams

With influent odours? When my joy  
and pain,

My thought and aspiration, like the stops  
Of pipe or flute, are absolutely dumb  
Unless melodious, do you play on me  
My pipers,—and if, sooth, you did not  
blow,

Would no sound come? or is the music  
mine,

As a man's voice or breath is called his  
own,

Inbreathed by the Life-breather! There's  
a doubt

For cloudy seasons!

But the sun was high  
When first I felt my pulses set themselves  
For concord; when the rhythmic turbu-  
lence

Of blood and brain swept outward upon  
words,

As wind upon the alders, blanching them  
By turning up their under-natures till

They trembled in dilation. O delight  
And triumph of the poet, who would say

A man's mere ‘yes,’ a woman's common  
‘no,’

A little human hope of that or this,  
And says the word so that it burns you  
through

With a special revelation, shakes the  
heart

Of all the men and women in the world,  
As if one came back from the dead and  
spoke,

With eyes too happy, a familiar thing  
Become divine in the utterance! while  
for him

The poet, speaker, he expands with joy;  
The palpitating angel in his flesh

Thrills inly with consenting fellowship  
To those innumerable spirits who sun  
themselves

Outside of time.

O life, O poetry,  
—Which means life in life! cognizant of  
life

Beyond this blood-beat, passionate for  
truth

Beyond these senses!—poetry, my life,  
My eagle, with both grappling feet still  
hot

From Zeus's thunder, who hast ravished  
me

Away from all the shepherds, sheep, and  
dogs,

And set me in the Olympian roar and  
round

Of luminous faces for a cup-bearer,  
To keep the mouths of all the godheads  
moist

For everlasting laughters,—I myself  
Half drunk across the beaker with their  
eyes!

How those gods look!

Enough so, Ganymede,  
We shall not bear above a round or two.  
We drop the golden cup at Heré's foot  
And swoon back to the earth,—and find  
ourselves

Face-down among the pine-cones, cold  
with dew.

While the dogs bark, and many a shepherd  
scoffs,

'What's come now to the youth?' Such  
ups and downs

Have poets.

Am I such indeed! The name  
Is royal, and to sign it like a queen,  
Is what I dare not,—though some royal  
blood

Would seem to tingle in me now and then,  
With sense of power and ache,—with  
imposthumes

And manias usual to the race. Howbeit  
I dare not: 'tis too easy to go mad  
And ape a Bourbon in a crown of straws;  
The thing's too common.

Many fervent souls  
Strike rime on rime, who would strike  
steel on steel

If steel had offered, in a restless heat  
Of doing something. Many tender souls  
Have strung their losses on a riming  
thread,

As children, cowslips:—the more pains  
they take,

The work more withers. Young men,  
aye, and maids,

Too often sow their wild oats in tame  
verse,

Before they sit down under their own vine  
And live for use. Alas, near all the birds  
Will sing at dawn,—and yet we do not  
take

The chaffering swallow for the holy lark.

In those days, though, I never analysed,  
Not even myself. Analysis comes late.  
You catch a sight of Nature, earliest,  
In full front sun-face, and your eyelids  
wink

And drop before the wonder of 't; you  
miss

The form, through seeing the light. I lived,  
those days,

And wrote because I lived—unlicensed  
else;

My heart beat in my brain. Life's violent  
flood

Abolished bounds,—and, which my  
neighbour's field,

Which mine, what mattered? it is thus  
in youth!

We play at leap-frog over the god Term;  
The love within us and the love without

Are mixed, confounded; if we are loved  
or love,

We scarce distinguish: thus, with other  
power;

Being acted on and acting seem the same:  
In that first onrush of life's chariot-  
wheels,

We know not if the forests move or we.

And so, like most young poets, in a flush  
Of individual life I poured myself

Along the veins of others, and achieved  
Mere lifeless imitations of live verse,

And made the living answer for the dead,  
Profaning nature. 'Touch not, do not

taste,  
Nor handle,'—we're too legal, who write  
young:

We beat the phorminx till we hurt our  
thumbs,

As if still ignorant of counterpoint;  
We call the Muse,—'O Muse, benignant

Muse,'—

As if we had seen her purple-braided  
head,

With the eyes in it, start between the  
boughs

As often as a stag's. What make-believe,  
With so much earnest! what effete results

From virile efforts! what cold wire-  
drawn odes,

From such white heats!—bucolics, where  
the cows

Would scare the writer if they splashed  
the mud

In lashing off the flies,—didactics, driven  
Against the heels of what the master said;

And counterfeiting epics, shrill with  
trumps

A babe might blow between two straining  
cheeks

Of bubbled rose, to make his mother  
laugh ;

And elegiac griefs, and songs of love,  
Like cast-off nosegays picked up on the  
road,

The worse for being warm : all these  
things, writ

On happy mornings, with a morning  
heart,

That leaps for love, is active for resolve,  
Weak for art only. Oft, the ancient  
forms

Will thrill, indeed, in carrying the young  
blood.

The wine-skins, now and then, a little  
warped,

Will crack even, as the new wine gurgles  
in.

Spare the old bottles !—spill not the new  
wine.

By Keats's soul, the man who never  
stepped

In gradual progress like another man,  
But, turning grandly on his central self,

Ensphered himself in twenty perfect  
years

And died, not young (the life of a long  
life

Distilled to a mere drop, falling like a tear  
Upon the world's cold cheek to make it  
burn

For ever) ; by that strong excepted soul,  
I count it strange and hard to understand

That nearly all young poets should write  
old,

That Pope was sexagenary at sixteen,  
And beardless Byron academical,

And so with others. It may be perhaps  
Such have not settled long and deep  
enough

In trance, to attain to clairvoyance,—  
and still

The memory mixes with the vision, spoils,  
And works it turbid.

Or perhaps, again,  
In order to discover the Muse-Sphinx,

The melancholy desert must sweep round,  
Behind you as before.—

For me, I wrote  
False poems, like the rest, and thought  
them true

Because myself was true in writing them.

I peradventure have writ true ones since  
With less complacency.

But I could not hide  
My quickening inner life from those at  
watch.

They saw a light at a window now and  
then,

They had not set there : who had set it  
there ?

My father's sister started when she caught  
My soul agaze in my eyes. She could  
not say

I had no business with a sort of soul,  
But plainly she objected,—and demurred

That souls were dangerous things to carry  
straight

Through all the spilt saltpetre of the  
world.

She said sometimes, 'Aurora, have you  
done

Your task this morning ? have you read  
that book ?

And are you ready for the crochet  
here ?—

As if she said, 'I know there's some-  
thing wrong ;

I know I have not ground you down  
enough

To flatten and bake you to a wholesome  
crust

For household uses and proprieties,  
Before the rain has got into my barn

And set the grains a-sprouting. What,  
you're green

With outdoor impudence ? you almost  
grow ?—

To which I answered, 'Would she hear  
my task,

And verify my abstract of the book ?  
Or should I sit down to the crochet work ?

Was such her pleasure ?' Then I sate  
and teased

The patient needle till it spilt the thread,  
Which oozed off from it in meandering  
lace

From hour to hour. I was not, there-  
fore, sad ;

My soul was singing at a work apart  
Behind the wall of sense, as safe from  
harm

As sings the lark when sucked up out of  
sight

In vortices of glory and blue air.

And so, through forced work and spontaneous work,  
 The inner life informed the outer life,  
 Reduced the irregular blood to a settled rhythm,  
 Made cool the forehead with fresh-sprinkling dreams,  
 And, rounding to the spheric soul the thin,  
 Pined body, struck a colour up the cheeks,  
 Though somewhat faint. I clenched my brows across  
 My blue eyes greatening in the looking-glass,  
 And said, 'We'll live, Aurora! we'll be strong.  
 The dogs are on us—but we will not die.'

Whoever lives true life, will love true love.

I learnt to love that England. Very oft,  
 Before the day was born, or otherwise  
 Through secret windings of the after-  
 noons,

I threw my hunters off and plunged myself

Among the deep hills, as a hunted stag  
 Will take the waters, shivering with the fear

And passion of the course. And when at last

Escaped, so many a green slope built on slope

Betwixt me and the enemy's house behind,

I dared to rest, or wander, in a rest  
 Made sweeter for the step upon the grass,

And view the ground's most gentle dim-  
 plement

(As if God's finger touched but did not press

In making England), such an up and down  
 Of verdure,—nothing too much up or down,

A ripple of land; such little hills, the sky  
 Can stoop to tenderly and the wheat-  
 fields climb;

Such nooks of valleys lined with orchises,  
 Fed full of noises by invisible streams;  
 And open pastures where you scarcely tell

White daisies from white dew,—at intervals

The mythic oaks and elm-trees standing out

Self-poised upon their prodigy of shade,—  
 I thought my father's land was worthy too

Of being my Shakespeare's.

Very oft alone,  
 Unlicensed; not unfrequently with leave  
 To walk the third with Romney and his friend

The rising painter, Vincent Carrington,  
 Whom men judge hardly as bee-bon-  
 neted,

Because he holds that, paint a body well,  
 You paint a soul by implication, like  
 The grand first Master. Pleasant walks!  
 for if

He said, 'When I was last in Italy,'  
 It sounded as an instrument that's played  
 Too far off for the tune—and yet it's fine  
 To listen.

After we walked only two,  
 If cousin Romney pleased to walk with me.

We read, or talked, or quarrelled, as it  
 chanced.

We were not lovers, nor even friends  
 well-matched:

Say rather, scholars upon different  
 tracks,

And thinkers disagreed; he, overfull  
 Of what is, and I, haply, overbold  
 For what might be.

But then the thrushes sang,  
 And shook my pulses and the elms' new  
 leaves;

At which I turned, and held my finger up,  
 And bade him mark that, howsoever the  
 world

Went ill, as he related, certainly  
 The thrushes still sang in it. At the  
 word

His brow would soften,—and he bore  
 with me

In melancholy patience, not unkind,  
 While breaking into voluble ecstasy  
 I flattered all the beauteous country  
 round,

As poets use, the skies, the clouds, the  
 fields,

The happy violets hiding from the roads  
 The primroses run down to, carrying  
 gold;

The tangled hedgerows, where the cows  
 push out  
 Impatient horns and tolerant churning  
 mouths  
 'Twixt dripping ash-boughs, — hedge-  
 rows all alive  
 With birds and gnats and large white  
 butterflies  
 Which look as if the May-flower had  
 caught life  
 And palpitated forth upon the wind ;  
 Hills, vales, woods, netted in a silver  
 mist,  
 Farms, granges, doubled up among the  
 hills ;  
 And cattle grazing in the watered vales,  
 And cottage-chimneys smoking from the  
 woods,  
 And cottage-gardens smelling every-  
 where,  
 Confused with smell of orchards. 'See,'  
 I said,  
 'And see! is God not with us on the  
 earth?  
 And shall we put Him down by aught  
 we do!  
 Who says there's nothing for the poor  
 and vile  
 Save poverty and wickedness? behold!  
 And ankle-deep in English grass I leaped  
 And clapped my hands, and called all  
 very fair.

In the beginning when God called all  
 good,  
 Even then was evil near us, it is writ ;  
 But we indeed who call things good and  
 fair,  
 The evil is upon us while we speak ;  
 Deliver us from evil, let us pray.

## SECOND BOOK

TIMES followed one another. Came a  
 morn  
 I stood upon the brink of twenty years,  
 And looked before and after, as I stood  
 Woman and artist,—either incomplete,  
 Both credulous of completion. There I  
 held  
 The whole creation in my little cup,

And smiled with thirsty lips before I  
 drank  
 'Good health to you and me, sweet  
 neighbour mine,  
 And all these people.'

I was glad, that day ;  
 The June was in me, with its multitudes  
 Of nightingales all singing in the dark,  
 And rosebuds reddening where the calyx  
 split.

I felt so young, so strong, so sure of God !  
 So glad, I could not choose be very wise !  
 And, old at twenty, was inclined to pull  
 My childhood backward in a childish jest  
 To see the face of 't once more, and  
 farewell !

In which fantastic mood I bounded forth  
 At early morning,—would not wait so  
 long

As even to snatch my bonnet by the  
 strings,

But, brushing a green trail across the  
 lawn

With my gown in the dew, took will  
 and way

Among the acacias of the shrubberies,  
 To fly my fancies in the open air  
 And keep my birthday, till my aunt awoke  
 To stop good dreams. Meanwhile I  
 murmured on

As honeyed bees keep humming to  
 themselves,

'The worthiest poets have remained un-  
 crowned

Till death has bleached their foreheads  
 to the bone ;

And so with me it must be unless I prove  
 Unworthy of the grand adversity,

And certainly I would not fail so much.  
 What, therefore, if I crown myself to-day  
 In sport, not pride, to learn the feel of it,  
 Before my brows be numbed as Dante's  
 own

To all the tender pricking of such leaves?  
 Such leaves! what leaves?

I pulled the branches down  
 To choose from.

'Not the bay! I choose no bay  
 (The fates deny us if we are overbold),  
 Nor myrtle—which means chiefly love ;  
 and love

Is something awful which one dares not  
 touch

So early o' mornings. This verbenas  
 strains  
 The point of passionate fragrance; and  
 hard by,  
 This guelder-rose, at far too slight a beck  
 Of the wind, will toss about her flower-  
 apples.

Ah—there's my choice,—that ivy on the  
 wall,  
 That headlong ivy! not a leaf will grow  
 But thinking of a wreath. Large leaves,  
 smooth leaves,

Serrated like my vines, and half as green.  
 I like such ivy, bold to leap a height  
 'Twas strong to climb; as good to grow  
 on graves

As twist about a thyrus; pretty too  
 (And that's not ill) when twisted round  
 a comb.'

Thus speaking to myself, half singing it,  
 Because some thoughts are fashioned  
 like a bell

To ring with once being touched, I drew  
 a wreath

Drenched, blinding me with dew, across  
 my brow,

And fastening it behind so, turning faced  
 . . My public!—cousin Romney—with  
 a mouth

Twice graver than his eyes.

I stood there fixed,—  
 My arms up, like the caryatid, sole  
 Of some abolished temple, helplessly  
 Persistent in a gesture which derides  
 A former purpose. Yet my blush was  
 flame,

As if from flax, not stone.

'Aurora Leigh,  
 The earliest of Auroras!'

Hand stretched out  
 I clasped, as shipwrecked men will clasp  
 a hand,

Indifferent to the sort of palm. The tide  
 Had caught me at my pastime, writing  
 down

My foolish name too near upon the sea  
 Which drowned me with a blush as  
 foolish. 'You,

My cousin!'

The smile died out in his eyes  
 And dropped upon his lips, a cold dead  
 weight,

For just a moment, 'Here's a book I  
 found!

No name writ on it—poems, by the  
 form;

Some Greek upon the margin,—lady's  
 Greek

Without the accents. Read it? Not  
 a word.

I saw at once the thing had witchcraft  
 in 't,

Whereof the reading calls up dangerous  
 spirits:

I rather bring it to the witch.'

'My book.

You found it' . .

'In the hollow by the stream  
 That beech leans down into—of which  
 you said

The Oread in it has a Naiad's heart  
 And pines for waters.'

'Thank you.'

'Thanks to you,  
 My cousin! that I have seen you not  
 too much

Witch, scholar, poet, dreamer, and the  
 rest,

To be a woman also.'

With a glance  
 The smile rose in his eyes again and  
 touched

The ivy on my forehead, light as air.  
 I answered gravely, 'Poets needs must be  
 Or men or women—more 's the pity.'

'Ah,  
 But men, and still less women, happily,  
 Scarce need be poets. Keep to the  
 green wreath,

Since even dreaming of the stone and  
 bronze

Brings headaches, pretty cousin, and  
 defiles

The clean white morning dresses.'

'So you judge!  
 Because I love the beautiful I must  
 Love pleasure chiefly, and be over-  
 charged

For ease and whiteness! well, you know  
 the world,

And only miss your cousin, 'tis not much.  
 But learn this; I would rather take my

part  
 With God's Dead, who afford to walk  
 in white

Yet spread His glory, than keep quiet  
here

And gather up my feet from even a step  
For fear to soil my gown in so much dust.  
I choose to walk at all risks.—Here, if  
heads

(That hold a rhythmic thought must  
ache perforce,

For my part I choose headaches,—and  
to-day's

My birthday.)

'Dear Aurora, choose instead  
To cure them. You have balsams.'

'I perceive.  
The headache is too noble for my sex.  
You think the heartache would sound  
decenter,

Since that 's the woman's special, proper  
ache,

And altogether tolerable, except  
To a woman.'

Saying which, I loosed my wreath,  
And swinging it beside me as I walked,  
Half petulant, half playful, as we walked,  
I sent a sidelong look to find his  
thought,—

As falcon set on falconer's finger may,  
With sidelong head, and startled, brav-  
ing eye,

Which means, 'You'll see—you'll see!  
I'll soon take flight,

You shall not hinder.' He, as shaking  
out

His hand and answering 'Fly then,' did  
not speak,

Except by such a gesture. Silently  
We paced, until, just coming into sight  
Of the house-windows, he abruptly  
caught

At one end of the swinging wreath, and  
said

'Aurora!' There I stopped short,  
breath and all.

'Aurora, let's be serious, and throw by  
This game of head and heart. Life  
means, be sure,

Both heart and head,—both active, both  
complete,

And both in earnest. Men and women  
make

The world, as head and heart make  
human life.

Work man, work woman, since there's  
work to do

In this beleaguered earth, for head and  
heart,

And thought can never do the work of  
love:

But work for ends, I mean for uses, not  
For such sleek fringes (do you call them

ends,  
Still less God's glory?) as we sew  
ourselves

Upon the velvet of those baldaquins  
Held 'twixt us and the sun. That book

of yours,  
I have not read a page of; but I toss

A rose up—it falls calyx down, you see!  
The chances are that, being a woman,

young  
And pure, with such a pair of large,  
calm eyes,

You write as well . . and ill . . upon the  
whole,

As other women. If as well, what then?  
If even a little better, . . still, what

then?

We want the Best in art now, or no art.  
The time is done for facile settings up

Of minnow gods, nymphs here and  
tritons there;

The polytheists have gone out in God,  
That unity of Bests. No best, no God!

And so with art, we say. Give art's  
divine,

Direct, indubitable, real as grief,  
Or leave us to the grief we grow ourselves

Divine by overcoming with mere hope  
And most prosaic patience. You, you

are young  
As Eve with nature's daybreak on her  
face,

But this same world you are come to,  
dearest coz,

Has done with keeping birthdays, saves  
her wreaths

To hang upon her ruins,—and forgets  
To rime the cry with which she still

beats back  
Those savage, hungry dogs that hunt  
her down

To the empty grave of Christ. The  
world's hard pressed;

The sweat of labour in the early curse  
Has (turning acrid in six thousand years)

Become the sweat of torture. Who has time.

An hour's time . . . think !—to sit upon a bank

And hear the cymbal tinkle in white hands?

When Egypt's slain, I say, let Miriam sing !—

Before—where's Moses?'

'Ah, exactly that.

Where's Moses?—is a Moses to be found?

You'll seek him vainly in the bulrushes,

While I in vain touch cymbals. Yet concede,

Such sounding brass has done some actual good

(The application in a woman's hand, If that were credible, being scarcely spoilt)

In colonizing beehives.'

'There it is !—

You play beside a death-bed like a child, Yet measure to yourself a prophet's place

To teach the living. 'None of all these things

Can women understand. You generalize

—Oh, nothing,—not even grief! Your quick-breathed hearts,

So sympathetic to the personal pang,

Close on each separate knife-stroke, yielding up

A whole life at each wound, incapable Of deepening, widening a large lap of life

To hold the world-full woe. The human race

To you means, such a child, or such a man, You saw one morning waiting in the cold,

Beside that gate, perhaps. You gather up A few such cases, and when strong

sometimes Will write of factories and of slaves, as if

Your father were a negro, and your son A spinner in the mills. All's yours and

you, All, coloured with your blood, or other-

wise Just nothing to you. Why, I call you hard

To general suffering. Here's the world half blind

With intellectual light, half brutalized

With civilization, having caught the plague

In silks from Tarsus, shrieking east and west

Along a thousand railroads, mad with pain And sin too! . . . does one woman of you all

(You who weep easily) grow pale to see This tiger shake his cage?—does one of

you Stand still from dancing, stop from

stringing pearls, And pine and die because of the great sum

Of universal anguish?—Show me a tear

Wet as Cordelia's, in eyes bright as yours,

Because the world is mad. You cannot count,

That you should weep for this account, not you!

You weep for what you know. A red-haired child

Sick in a fever, if you touch him once, Though but so little as with a finger-tip,

Will set you weeping; but a million sick . . .

You could as soon weep for the rule of three

Or compound fractions. Therefore this same world,

Uncomprehended by you, must remain Uninfluenced by you.—Women as you

are, Mere women, personal and passionate,

You give us dotting mothers, and perfect wives,

Sublime Madonnas, and enduring saints!

We get no Christ from you,—and verily We shall not get a poet, in my mind.'

'With which conclusion you conclude' . . .

'But this: That you, Aurora, with the large live brow

And steady eyelids, cannot condescend To play at art, as children play at swords,

To show a pretty spirit, chiefly admired Because true action is impossible.

You never can be satisfied with praise Which men give women when they

judge a book Not as mere work but as mere woman's

work, Expressing the comparative respect

Which means the absolute scorn. "Oh, excellent!

What grace, what facile turns, what fluent sweeps,

What delicate discernment . . almost  
thought!

The book does honour to the sex, we  
hold.

Among our female authors we make room  
For this fair writer, and congratulate  
The country that produces in these times  
Such women, competent to . . spell."

'Stop there.'

I answered, burning through his thread  
of talk

With a quick flame of emotion,—' You  
have read

My soul, if not my book, and argue well.  
I would not condescend . . we will not  
say

To such a kind of praise (a worthless end  
Is praise of all kinds), but to such a use  
Of holy art and golden life. I am young,  
And peradventure weak—you tell me  
so—

Through being a woman. And, for all  
the rest,

Take thanks for justice. I would rather  
dance

At fairs on tight-rope, till the babies  
dropped

Their gingerbread for joy,—than shift  
the types

For tolerable verse, intolerable  
To men who act and suffer. Better far  
Pursue a frivolous trade by serious means,  
Than a sublime art frivolously.'

'You,

Choose nobler work than either, O moist  
eyes

And hurrying lips and heaving heart!  
We are young,

Aurora, you and I. The world,—look  
round,—

The world, we're come to late, is  
swollen hard

With perished generations and their sins:  
The civilizer's spade grinds horribly

On dead men's bones, and cannot turn  
up soil

That's otherwise than fetid. All success  
Proves partial failure; all advance im-  
plies

What's left behind; all triumph, some-  
thing crushed

At the chariot-wheels; all government,  
some wrong:

And rich men make the poor, who curse  
the rich,

Who agonize together, rich and poor,  
Under and over, in the social spasm

And crisis of the ages. Here's an age  
That makes its own vocation! here we  
have stepped

Across the bounds of time! here's nought  
to see,

But just the rich man and just Lazarus,  
And both in torments, with a mediate

gulf,  
Though not a hint of Abraham's bosom.

Who  
Being man, Aurora, can stand calmly by  
And view these things, and never tease

his soul  
For some great cure! No physic for  
this grief,

In all the earth and heavens too?'  
'You believe

In God, for your part?—aye? that He  
who makes,

Can make good things from ill things,  
best from worst,

As men plant tulips upon dunghills when  
They wish them finest!'

'True. A death-heat is  
The same as life-heat, to be accurate,

And in all nature is no death at all,  
As men account of death, so long as God

Stands witnessing for life perpetually,  
By being just God. That's abstract

truth, I know,  
Philosophy, or sympathy with God:

But I, I sympathize with man, not God  
(I think I was a man for chiefly this),

And when I stand beside a dying bed,  
'Tis death to me. Observe,—it had

not much  
Consoled the race of mastodons to know,

Before they went to fossil, that anon  
Their place would quicken with the

elephant:  
They were not elephants but mastodons;

And I, a man, as men are now, and not  
As men may be hereafter, feel with men

In the agonizing present.'

'Is it so,'  
I said, 'my cousin? is the world so bad,

While I hear nothing of it through the  
trees?

The world was always evil,—but so bad?'

'So bad, Aurora. Dear, my soul is grey  
With poring over the long sum of ill;  
So much for vice, so much for discontent,  
So much for the necessities of power,  
So much for the connivances of fear,  
Coherent in statistical despairs  
With such a total of distracted life, . .  
To see it down in figures on a page,  
Plain, silent, clear, as God sees through  
the earth

The sense of all the graves,—that's  
terrible

For one who is not God, and cannot right  
The wrong he looks on. May I choose  
indeed

But vow away my years, my means,  
my aims,

Among the helpers, if there's any help  
In such a social strait! The common  
blood

That swings along my veins is strong  
enough

To draw me to this duty.'

Then I spoke.

'I have not stood long on the strand of  
life,

And these salt waters have had scarcely  
time

To creep so high up as to wet my feet:  
I cannot judge these tides—I shall,  
perhaps.

A woman's always younger than a man  
At equal years, because she is disallowed  
Maturing by the outdoor sun and air,  
And kept in long-clothes past the age  
to walk.

Ah well, I know you men judge other-  
wise!

You think a woman ripens as a peach,  
In the cheeks, chiefly. Pass it to me  
now;

I'm young in age, and younger still,  
I think,

As a woman. But a child may say amen  
To a bishop's prayer and feel the way it  
goes,

And I, incapable to loose the knot  
Of social questions, can approve, applaud  
August compassion, Christian thoughts  
that shoot

Beyond the vulgar white of personal aims.  
Accept my reverence.'

There he glowed on me

With all his face and eyes. 'No other  
help?'

Said he—'no more than so!'

'What help?' I asked.

'You'd scorn my help,—as Nature's  
self, you say,

Has scorned to put her music in my mouth  
Because a woman's. Do you now turn  
round

And ask for what a woman cannot give?'

'For what she only can, I turn and ask,'  
He answered, catching up my hands in  
his,

And dropping on me from his high-eaved  
brow

The full weight of his soul,—'I ask for  
love,

And that, she can; for life in fellowship  
Through bitter duties—that, I know she  
can;

For wifehood—will she?'

'Now,' I said, 'may God  
Be witness 'twixt us two!' and with  
the word,

Meseemed I floated into a sudden light  
Above his stature,—'am I proved too  
weak

To stand alone, yet strong enough to bear  
Such leaners on my shoulder? poor  
to think,

Yet rich enough to sympathize with  
thought?

Incompetent to sing, as blackbirds can,  
Yet competent to love, like Him?'

I paused;

Perhaps I darkened, as the lighthouse  
will

That turns upon the sea. 'It's always so.  
Anything does for a wife.'

'Aurora, dear,  
And dearly honoured,'—he pressed in  
at once

With eager utterance,—'you translate  
me ill.

I do not contradict my thought of you  
Which is most reverent, with another  
thought

Found less so. If your sex is weak for art  
(And I who said so, did but honour you  
By using truth in courtship), it is strong  
For life and duty. Place your fecund  
heart

In mine, and let us blossom for the world  
That wants love's colour in the grey of  
time.

My talk, meanwhile, is arid to you, ay,  
Since all my talk can only set you where  
You look down coldly on the arena-heaps  
Of headless bodies, shapeless, indistinct!  
The Judgement-Angel scarce would find  
his way

Through such a heap of generalized dis-  
tress

To the individual man with lips and eyes,  
Much less Aurora. Ah, my sweet, come  
down,

And hand in hand we'll go where yours  
shall touch

These victims, one by one! till, one by  
one,

The formless, nameless trunk of every  
man

Shall seem to wear a head with hair  
you know,

And every woman catch your mother's  
face

To melt you into passion.'

'I am a girl,'  
I answered slowly; 'you do well to name  
My mother's face. Though far too early,  
alas,

God's hand did interpose 'twixt it and  
me,

I know so much of love as used to shine  
In that face and another. Just so much;  
No more indeed at all. I have not seen  
So much love since, I pray you pardon me,  
As answers even to make a marriage with  
In this cold land of England. What  
you love,

Is not a woman, Romney, but a cause:  
You want a helpmate, not a mistress, sir.  
A wife to help your ends,—in her no end!  
Your cause is noble, your ends excellent,  
But I, being most unworthy of these  
and that,

Dootherwise conceive of love. Farewell.'

'Farewell, Aurora! you reject me thus?'  
He said.

'Sir, you were married long ago.  
You have a wife already whom you love,  
Your social theory. Bless you both, I say.  
For my part, I am scarcely meek enough  
To be the handmaid of a lawful spouse.

Do I look a Hagar, think you?'  
'So you jest.'

'Nay, so, I speak in earnest,' I replied.  
'You treat of marriage too much like,  
at least,

A chief apostle: you would bear with you  
A wife... a sister... shall we speak it out?  
A sister of charity.'

'Then, must it be  
Indeed farewell? And was I so far wrong  
In hope and in illusion, when I took  
The woman to be nobler than the man,  
Yourself the noblest woman, in the use  
And comprehension of what love is,—  
love,

That generates the likeness of itself  
Through all heroic duties? so far wrong,  
In saying bluntly, venturing truth on  
love,

"Come, human creature, love and work  
with me,"—

Instead of, "Lady, thou art wondrous fair,  
And, where the Graces walk before,  
the Muse

Will follow at the lightning of their eyes,  
And where the Muse walks, lovers need  
to creep:

Turn round and love me, or I die of love."

With quiet indignation I broke in.

'You misconceive the question like a man,  
Who sees a woman as the complement  
Of his sex merely. You forget too much  
That every creature, female as the male,  
Stands single in responsible act and  
thought

As also in birth and death. Whoever says  
To a loyal woman, "Love and work  
with me,"

Will get fair answers if the work and love,  
Being good themselves, are good for  
her—the best

She was born for. Women of a softer  
mood,  
Surprised by men when scarcely awake  
to life,

Will sometimes only hear the first word,  
love,

And catch up with it any kind of work,  
Indifferent, so that dear love go with it.  
I do not blame such women, though,  
for love,

They pick much oakum ; earth's fanatics  
make

Too frequently heaven's saints. But  
*me* your work

Is not the best for,—nor your love the  
best,

Nor able to commend the kind of work  
For love's sake merely. Ah, you force  
me, sir,

To be over-bold in speaking of myself :  
I too have my vocation,—work to do,  
The heavens and earth have set me  
since I changed

My father's face for theirs, and, though  
your world

Were twice as wretched as you repre-  
sent,

Most serious work, most necessary work  
As any of the economists'. Reform,

Make trade a Christian possibility,  
And individual right no general wrong ;

Wipe out earth's furrows of the Thine  
and Mine,

And leave one green for men to play at  
bowls,

With innings for them all ! . . what then,  
indeed,

If mortals are not greater by the head  
Than any of their prosperities ! what  
then,

Unless the artist keep up open roads  
Betwixt the seen and unseen,—bursting  
through

The best of your conventions with his  
best,

The speakable, imaginable best  
God bids him speak, to prove what lies  
beyond

Both speech and imagination ? A starved  
man

Exceeds a fat beast : we'll not barter, sir,  
The beautiful for barley.—And, even so,  
I hold you will not compass your poor  
ends

Of barley-feeding and material ease,  
Without a poet's individualism

To work your universal. It takes a soul  
To move a body : it takes a high-souled  
man

To move the masses, even to a cleaner  
sty :

It takes the ideal to blow a hair's-  
breadth off

The dust of the actual.—Ah, your  
Fouriers failed,

Because not poets enough to understand  
That life develops from within.—For  
me,

Perhaps I am not worthy, as you say,  
Of work like this : perhaps a woman's soul  
Aspires, and not creates : yet we aspire,  
And yet I'll try out your perhapses, sir ;  
And if I fail . . why, burn me up my  
straw

Like other false works—I'll not ask for  
grace ;

Your scorn is better, cousin Romney. I,  
Who love my art, would never wish it  
lower .

To suit my stature. I may love my art.  
You'll grant that even a woman may  
love art,

Seeing that to waste true love on anything  
Is womanly, past question.'

I retain  
The very last word which I said that day,  
As you the creaking of the door, years  
past,

Which let upon you such disabling news  
You ever after have been graver. He,  
His eyes, the motions in his silent mouth,  
Were fiery points on which my words  
were caught,

Transfixed for ever in my memory  
For his sake, not their own. And yet  
I know

I did not love him . . nor he me . . that's  
sure . .

And what I said is unrepented of,  
As truth is always. Yet . . a princely  
man !—

If hard to me, heroic for himself !  
He bears down on me through the  
slanting years,

The stronger for the distance. If he  
had loved,

Aye, loved me, with that retributive  
face, . .

I might have been a common woman now  
And happier, less known and less left  
alone,

Perhaps a better woman after all,  
With chubby children hanging on my  
neck

To keep me low and wise. Ah me, the  
vines

That bear such fruit are proud to stoop  
with it.  
The palm stands upright in a realm of  
sand.

And I, who spoke the truth then, stand  
upright,  
Still worthy of having spoken out the  
truth;

By being content I spoke it, though it set  
Him there, me here.—O woman's vile  
remorse,

To hanker after a mere name, a show,  
A supposition, a potential love!

Does every man who names love in our  
lives,

Become a power for that? Is love's true  
thing

So much best to us, that what personates  
love

Is next best? A potential love, forsooth!  
I'm not so vile. No, no—he cleaves,  
I think,

This man, this image,—chiefly for the  
wrong

And shock he gave my life, in finding me  
Precisely where the devil of my youth  
Had set me, on those mountain-peaks of  
hope

All glittering with the dawn-dew, all  
erect

And famished for the noon,—exclaiming,  
while

I looked for empire and much tribute,  
'Come,

I have some worthy work for thee below.  
Come, sweep my barns and keep my  
hospitals,

And I will pay thee with a current coin  
Which men give women.'

As we spoke, the grass  
Was trod in haste beside us, and my  
aunt,

With smile distorted by the sun,—face,  
voice

As much at issue with the summer-day  
As if you brought a candle out of doors,—  
Broke in with, 'Romney, here!—My  
child, entreat

Your cousin to the house, and have  
your talk,

If girls must talk upon their birthdays.  
Come.'

He answered for me calmly, with pale lips  
That seemed to motion for a smile in vain,  
'The talk is ended, madam, where we  
stand.

Your brother's daughter has dismissed  
me here;

And all my answer can be better said  
Beneath the trees, than wrong by such  
a word

Your house's hospitalities. Farewell.'

With that he vanished. I could hear  
his heel

Ring bluntly in the lane, as down he leapt  
The short way from us.—Then a mea-  
sured speech

Withdrew me. 'What means this,  
Aurora Leigh?

My brother's daughter has dismissed  
my guests!'

The lion in me felt the keeper's voice  
Through all its quivering dewlaps;  
I was quelled

Before her,—meekened to the child she  
knew:

I prayed her pardon, said, 'I had little  
thought

To give dismissal to a guest of hers,  
In letting go a friend of mine who came  
To take me into service as a wife,—  
No more than that, indeed.'

'No more, no more!  
Pray Heaven,' she answered, 'that  
I was not mad.

I could not mean to tell her to her face  
That Romney Leigh had asked me for  
a wife,

And I refused him?'

'Did he ask?' I said;  
'I think he rather stooped to take me up  
For certain uses which he found to do  
For something called a wife. He never  
asked.'

'What stuff!' she answered; 'are they  
queens, these girls?

They must have mantles, stitched with  
twenty silks,

Spread out upon the ground, before  
they'll step

One footstep for the noblest lover born.'

'But I am born,' I said with firmness, 'I,  
To walk another way than his, dear aunt.'

'You walk, you walk! A babe at  
thirteen months

Will walk as well as you,' she cried in  
haste,

'Without a steady finger. Why,  
you child,

God help you, you are groping in the dark,  
For all this sunlight. You suppose,  
perhaps,

That you, sole offspring of an opulent man,  
Are rich and free to choose a way to walk?  
You think, and it's a reasonable thought,  
That I, beside, being well to do in life,  
Will leave my handful in my niece's hand  
When death shall paralyse these fingers?

Pray,

Pray, child, albeit I know you love me not,  
As if you loved me, that I may not die!  
For when I die and leave you, out you go  
(Unless I make room for you in my grave),  
Unhoused, unfed, my dear, poor brother's  
lamb

(Ah heaven,—that pains!)—without  
a right to crop

A single blade of grass beneath these trees,  
Or cast a lamb's small shadow on the lawn,  
Unfed, unfolded! Ah, my brother, here's  
The fruit you planted in your foreign  
loves!—

Aye, there's the fruit he planted! never  
look

Astonished at me with your mother's  
eyes,

For it was they who set you where you are,  
An undowered orphan. Child, your  
father's choice

Of that said mother, disinherited

His daughter, his and hers. Men do  
not think

Of sons and daughters, when they fall  
in love,

So much more than of sisters; otherwise  
He would have paused to ponder what  
he did,

And shrunk before that clause in the entail  
Excluding offspring by a foreign wife

(The clause set up a hundred years ago  
By a Leigh who wedded a French  
dancing-girl

And had his heart danced over in return);

But this man shrank at nothing, never  
thought

Of you, Aurora, any more than me—  
Your mother must have been a pretty  
thing,

For all the coarse Italian blacks and  
browns,

To make a good man, which my brother  
was,

Unchary of the duties to his house;  
But so it fell indeed. Our cousin Vane,

Vane Leigh, the father of this Romney,  
wrote

Directly on your birth, to Italy,

"I ask your baby daughter for my son

In whom the entail now merges by the  
law.

Betroth her to us out of love, instead

Of colder reasons, and she shall not lose  
By love or law from henceforth"—so he

wrote;

A generous cousin, was my cousin Vane.

Remember how he drew you to his knee  
The year you came here, just before he

died,

And hollowed out his hands to hold  
your cheeks,

And wished them redder,—you re-  
member Vane!

And now his son who represents our  
house

And holds the fiefs and manors in his  
place,

To whom reverts my pittance when  
I die

(Except a few books and a pair of shawls),

The boy is generous like him, and pre-  
pared

To carry out his kindest word and thought

To you, Aurora. Yes, a fine young man  
Is Romney Leigh; although the sun of

youth

Has shone too straight upon his brain,  
I know,

And fevered him with dreams of doing  
good

To good-for-nothing people. But a wife  
Will put all right, and stroke his temples

cool

With healthy touches' . . .

I broke in at that.

I could not lift my heavy heart to breathe  
Till then, but then I raised it, and it fell

In broken words like these—'No need  
to wait;  
The dream of doing good to . . me, at  
least,  
Is ended, without waiting for a wife  
To cool the fever for him. We've es-  
caped  
That danger,—thank Heaven for it.'  
'You,' she cried,  
'Have got a fever. What, I talk and  
talk  
An hour long to you,—I instruct you how  
You cannot eat or drink or stand or sit  
Or even die, like any decent wretch  
In all this unroofed and unfurnished  
world,  
Without your cousin,—and you still  
maintain  
There's room 'twixt him and you, for  
flirting fans  
And running knots in eyebrows! You  
must have  
A pattern lover sighing on his knee!  
You do not count enough, a noble heart  
(Above book-patterns) which this very  
morn  
Unclosed itself in two dear fathers' names  
To embrace your orphaned life? fie, fie!  
But stay,  
I write a word, and counteract this sin.'

She would have turned to leave me, but  
I clung.  
'O sweet my father's sister, hear my  
word  
Before you write yours. Cousin Vane  
did well,  
And cousin Romney well,—and I well  
too,  
In casting back with all my strength  
and will  
The good they meant me. O my God,  
my God!  
God meant me good, too, when he  
hindered me  
From saying "yes" this morning. If  
you write  
A word, it shall be "no." I say no, no!  
I tie up "no" upon His altar-horns,  
Quite out of reach of perjury! At least  
My soul is not a pauper; I can live  
At least my soul's life, without alms  
from men;

And if it must be in heaven instead of  
earth,  
Let heaven look to it,—I am not afraid.'

She seized my hands with both hers.  
strained them fast,  
And drew her probing and unscrupulous  
eyes  
Right through me, body and heart.  
'Yet, foolish Sweet,  
You love this man. I've watched you  
when he came,  
And when he went, and when we've  
talked of him:  
I am not old for nothing; I can tell  
The weather-signs of love: you love  
this man.'

Girls blush sometimes because they are  
alive,  
Half wishing they were dead to save  
the shame,  
The sudden blush devours them, neck  
and brow;  
They have drawn too near the fire of  
life, like gnats,  
And flare up bodily, wings and all.  
What then?

Who's sorry for a gnat . . or girl?  
I blushed.  
I feel the brand upon my forehead now  
Strike hot, sear deep, as guiltless men  
may feel  
The felon's iron, say, and scorn the mark  
Of what they are not. Most illogical  
Irrational nature of our womanhood,  
That blushes one way, feels another  
way,  
And prays, perhaps, another! After all,  
We cannot be the equal of the male  
Who rules his blood a little.

For although  
I blushed indeed, as if I loved the man,  
And her incisive smile, accrediting  
That treason of false witness in my blush,  
Did bow me downward like a swathe  
of grass  
Below its level that struck me,—I attest  
The conscious skies and all their daily  
suns,  
I think I loved him not,—nor then, nor  
since,  
Nor ever. Do we love the schoolmaster,

Being busy in the woods? much less,  
 being poor,  
 The overseer of the parish? Do we keep  
 Our love to pay our debts with?

White and cold  
 I grew next moment. As my blood  
 recoiled

From that imputed ignominy, I made  
 My heart great with it. Then, at last,  
 I spoke,

Spoke veritable words but passionate,  
 Too passionate perhaps . . . ground up  
 with sobs

To shapeless endings. She let fall my  
 hands

And took her smile off, in sedate disgust,  
 As peradventure she had touched a  
 snake,—

A dead snake, mind!—and turning  
 round, replied,

‘We’ll leave Italian manners, if you  
 please.

I think you had an English father, child,  
 And ought to find it possible to speak  
 A quiet “yes” or “no,” like English girls,  
 Without convulsions. In another month  
 We’ll take another answer—no, or yes.’  
 With that, she left me in the garden-  
 walk.

I had a father! yes, but long ago—  
 How long it seemed that moment. Oh,  
 how far,

How far and safe, God, dost Thou keep  
 Thy saints

When once gone from us! We may  
 call against

The lighted windows of Thy fair June-  
 heaven

Where all the souls are happy,—and  
 not one,

Not even my father, look from work  
 or play

To ask, ‘Who is it that cries after us,  
 Below there, in the dusk?’ Yet formerly  
 He turned his face upon me quick enough,  
 If I said ‘father.’ Now I might cry loud;  
 The little lark reached higher with his  
 song

Than I with crying. Oh, alone, alone,—  
 Not troubling any in heaven, nor any  
 on earth,

I stood there in the garden, and looked up

The deaf blue sky that brings the roses  
 out

On such June mornings.

You who keep account  
 Of crisis and transition in this life,  
 Set down the first time Nature says  
 plain ‘no’

To some ‘yes’ in you, and walks over you  
 In gorgeous sweeps of scorn. We all  
 begin

By singing with the birds, and running  
 fast

With June-days, hand in hand: but  
 once, for all,

The birds must sing against us, and the sun  
 Strike down upon us like a friend’s  
 sword caught

By an enemy to slay us, while we read  
 The dear name on the blade which bites  
 at us!—

That’s bitter and convincing: after that,  
 We seldom doubt that something in the  
 large

Smooth order of creation, though no  
 more

Than haply a man’s footstep, has gone  
 wrong.

Some tears fell down my cheeks, and  
 then I smiled,

As those smile who have no face in the  
 world

To smile back to them. I had lost a friend  
 In Romney Leigh; the thing was sure—  
 a friend,

Who had looked at me most gently now  
 and then,

And spoken of my favourite books, ‘our  
 books,’

With such a voice! Well, voice and  
 look were now

More utterly shut out from me, I felt,  
 Than even my father’s. Romney now  
 was turned

To a benefactor, to a generous man,  
 Who had tied himself to marry . . . me,  
 instead

Of such a woman, with low timorous lids  
 He lifted with a sudden word one day,  
 And left, perhaps, for my sake.—Ah,  
 self-tied

By a contract, male Iphigenia bound  
 At a fatal Aulis for the winds to change

(But loose him, they'll not change), he  
 well might seem  
 A little cold and dominant in love!  
 He had a right to be dogmatical,  
 This poor, good Romney. Love, to him,  
 was made  
 A simple law-clause. If I married him,  
 I should not dare to call my soul my own  
 Which so he had bought and paid for:  
 every thought  
 And every heart-beat down there in the  
 bill;  
 Not one found honestly deductible  
 From any use that pleased him! He  
 might cut  
 My body into coins to give away  
 Among his other paupers; change my  
 sons,  
 While I stood dumb as Griseld, for black  
 babes  
 Or piteous foundlings; might unques-  
 tioned set  
 My right hand teaching in the Ragged  
 Schools,  
 My left hand washing in the Public Baths,  
 What time my angel of the Ideal stretched  
 Both his to me in vain. I could not claim  
 The poor right of a mouse in a trap, to  
 squeal,  
 And take so much as pity from myself.

Farewell, good Romney! if I loved you  
 even,  
 I could but ill afford to let you be  
 So generous to me. Farewell, friend,  
 since friend  
 Betwixt us two, forsooth, must be a  
 word  
 So heavily overladen. And, since help  
 Must come to me from those who love  
 me not,  
 Farewell, all helpers—I must help my-  
 self,  
 And am alone from henceforth.—Then  
 I stooped  
 And lifted the soiled garland from the  
 earth,  
 And set it on my head as bitterly  
 As when the Spanish monarch crowned  
 the bones  
 Of his dead love. So be it. I preserve  
 That crown still,—in the drawer there!  
 'twas the first.

The rest are like it;—those Olympian  
 crowns,  
 We run for, till we lose sight of the sun  
 In the dust of the racing chariots!

After that,  
 Before the evening fell, I had a note,  
 Which ran,—‘Aurora, sweet Chaldean,  
 you read  
 My meaning backward like your eastern  
 books.  
 While I am from the west, dear. Read  
 me now  
 A little plainer. Did you hate me quite  
 But yesterday? I loved you for my part;  
 I love you. If I spoke untenderly  
 This morning, my beloved, pardon it;  
 And comprehend me that I loved you so  
 I set you on the level of my soul,  
 And overwashed you with the bitter  
 brine  
 Of some habitual thoughts. Henceforth,  
 my flower,  
 Be planted out of reach of any such,  
 And lean the side you please, with all  
 your leaves!  
 Write woman's verses and dream wo-  
 man's dreams;  
 But let me feel your perfume in my home  
 To make my sabbath after working-days.  
 Bloom out your youth beside me,—be  
 my wife.’

I wrote in answer—‘We Chaldeans  
 discern  
 Still farther than we read. I know your  
 heart,  
 And shut it like the holy book it is,  
 Reserved for mild-eyed saints to pore  
 upon  
 Betwixt their prayers at vespers. Well,  
 you're right,  
 I did not surely hate you yesterday;  
 And yet I do not love you enough to-day  
 To wed you, cousin Romney. Take this  
 word,  
 And let it stop you as a generous man  
 From speaking farther. You may tease,  
 indeed,  
 And blow about my feelings, or my leaves,  
 And here's my aunt will help you with  
 east winds  
 And break a stalk, perhaps, tormenting  
 me;

But certain flowers grow near as deep  
as trees,  
And, cousin, you'll not move my root,  
not you,  
With all your confluent storms. Then  
let me grow  
Within my wayside hedge, and pass  
your way!  
This flower has never as much to say to you  
As the antique tomb which said to travellers,  
"Pause,"

"Siste, viator." Ending thus, I signed.

The next week passed in silence, so the  
next,

And several after: Romney did not come  
Nor my aunt chide me. I lived on and on,  
As if my heart were kept beneath a glass,  
And everybody stood, all eyes and ears,  
To see and hear it tick. I could not sit,  
Nor walk, nor take a book, nor lay it  
down,

Nor sew on steadily, nor drop a stitch,  
And a sigh with it, but I felt her looks  
Still cleaving to me, like the sucking asp  
To Cleopatra's breast, persistently  
Through the intermittent pantings. Being  
observed,

When observation is not sympathy,  
Is just being tortured. If she said a word,  
A 'thank you,' or an 'if it please you, dear,'  
She meant a commination, or, at best,  
An exorcism against the devildom  
Which plainly held me. So with all the  
house.

Susannah could not stand and twist my  
hair,

Without such glancing at the looking-  
glass

To see my face there, that she missed  
the plait.

And John,—I never sent my plate for  
soup,

Or did not send it, but the foolish John  
Resolved the problem, 'twixt his nap-  
kined thumbs,

Of what was signified by taking soup  
Or choosing mackerel. Neighbours who  
dropped in

On morning visits, feeling a joint wrong,  
Smiled admonition, sate uneasily,  
And talked with measured, emphasized  
reserve,

Of parish news, like doctors to the sick,  
When not called in,—as if, with leave  
to speak,  
They might say something. Nay, the  
very dog  
Would watch me from his sun-patch on  
the floor,  
In alternation with the large black fly  
Not yet in reach of snapping. So I lived.

A Roman died so; smeared with honey,  
teased

By insects, stared to torture by the noon:  
And many patient souls 'neath English  
roofs

Have died like Romans. I, in looking  
back,

Wish only, now, I had borne the plague  
of all

With meeker spirits than were rife at  
Rome.

For, on the sixth week, the dead sea  
broke up,

Dashed suddenly through beneath the  
heel of Him

Who stands upon the sea and earth and  
swears

Time shall be nevermore. The clock  
struck nine

That morning too,—no lark was out of  
tune,

The hidden farms among the hills  
breathed straight

Their smoke toward heaven, the lime-  
tree scarcely stirred

Beneath the blue weight of the cloudless  
sky,

Though still the July air came floating  
through

The woodbine at my window, in and out,  
With touches of the outdoor country-  
news

For a bending forehead. There I sate,  
and wished

That morning-truce of God would last  
till eve,

Or longer. 'Sleep,' I thought, 'late  
sleepers,—sleep,

And spare me yet the burden of your eyes.'

Then, suddenly, a single ghastly shriek  
Tore upward from the bottom of the house.

Like one who wakens in a grave and shrieks,  
 The still house seemed to shriek itself alive,  
 And shudder through its passages and stairs  
 With slam of doors and clash of bells.—  
 I sprang,  
 I stood up in the middle of the room,  
 And there confronted at my chamber-door,  
 A white face,—shivering, ineffectual lips.

'Come, come,' they tried to utter, and I went:  
 As if a ghost had drawn me at the point  
 Of a fiery finger through the uneven dark,  
 I went with reeling footsteps down the stair,  
 Nor asked a question.

There she sate, my aunt,—  
 Bolt upright in the chair beside her bed,  
 Whose pillow had no dint! she had used no bed  
 For that night's sleeping, yet slept well.  
 My God,  
 The dumb derision of that grey, peaked face  
 Concluded something grave against the sun,  
 Which filled the chamber with its July burst

When Susan drew the curtains ignorant  
 Of whose open-eyed behind her. There  
 She sate . . . it sate . . . we said 'she'  
 yesterday . . .  
 And held a letter with unbroken seal  
 As Susan gave it to her hand last night:  
 All night she had held it. If its news  
 referred  
 To duchies or to dunghills, not an inch  
 She'd budge, 'twas obvious, for such  
 worthless odds:  
 Nor, though the stars were suns and overburned  
 Their spheric limitations, swallowing up  
 Like wax the azure spaces, could they  
 force  
 Those open eyes to wink once. What  
 last sight  
 Had left them blank and flat so,—drawing out

The faculty of vision from the roots,  
 As nothing more, worth seeing, remained  
 behind!

Were those the eyes that watched me,  
 worried me?  
 That dogged me up and down the hours  
 and days.

A beaten, breathless, miserable soul!  
 And did I pray, a half-hour back, but so,  
 To escape the burden of those eyes . . .  
 those eyes?

'Sleep late,' I said?—

Why now, indeed, they sleep.  
 God answers sharp and sudden on some  
 prayers,

And thrusts the thing we have prayed  
 for in our face,  
 A gauntlet with a gift in 't. Every wish  
 Is like a prayer, with God.

I had my wish,  
 To read and meditate the thing I would,  
 To fashion all my life upon my thought,  
 And marry or not marry. Henceforth  
 none  
 Could disapprove me, vex me, hamper me.  
 Full ground-room, in this desert newly  
 made,  
 For Babylon or Balbec,—when the  
 breath,  
 Now choked with sand, returns for building towns.

The heir came over on the funeral day,  
 And we two cousins met before the dead,  
 With two pale faces. Was it death or life  
 That moved us? When the will was read  
 and done,

The official guests and witnesses withdrawn,

We rose up in a silence almost hard,  
 And looked at one another. Then I said,  
 'Farewell, my cousin.'

But he touched, just touched  
 My hatstrings tied for going (at the door  
 The carriage stood to take me), and said  
 low,

His voice a little unsteady through his  
 smile,

'Siste, viator.'

'Is there time,' I asked,  
 'In these last days of railroads, to stop  
 short

Like Caesar's chariot (weighing half a ton)  
On the Appian road for morals?'

'There is time,'  
He answered grave, 'for necessary  
words,

Inclusive, trust me, of no epitaph  
On man or act, my cousin. We have read  
A will, which gives you all the personal  
goods

And funded moneys of your aunt.'

'I thank  
Her memory for it. With three hundred  
pounds

We buy in England even, clear standing-  
room

To stand and work in. Only two hours  
since,

I fancied I was poor.'

'And, cousin, still  
You're richer than you fancy. The will  
says,

*Three hundred pounds, and any other sum  
Of which the said testatrix dies possessed.*

I say she died possessed of other sums.'

'Dear Romney, need we chronicle the  
pence?

I'm richer than I thought—that's evident.  
Enough so.'

'Listen rather. You've to do  
With business and a cousin,' he resumed,  
'And both, I fear, need patience. Here's  
the fact.

The other sum (there is another sum,  
Unspecified in any will which dates  
After possession, yet bequeathed as  
much

And clearly as those said three hundred  
pounds)

Is thirty thousand. You will have it paid  
When? . . . where? My duty troubles  
, you with words.'

He struck the iron when the bar was hot;  
No wonder if my eyes sent out some  
sparks.

'Pause there! I thank you. You are  
delicate

In glosing gifts;—but I, who share your  
blood,

Am rather made for giving, like yourself,  
Than taking, like your pensioners. Fare-  
well.'

He stopped me with a gesture of calm  
pride.

'A Leigh,' he said, 'gives largesse and  
gives love,

But gloses never: if a Leigh could glose,  
He would norder it, moreover, to a Leigh,  
With blood trained up along nine cen-  
turies

To hound and hate a lie from eyes like  
yours.

And now we'll make the rest as clear;  
your aunt

Possessed these moneys.'

'You will make it clear,  
My cousin, as the honour of us both,  
Or one of us speaks vainly! that's not I.

My aunt possessed this sum,—inherited  
From whom, and when? bring docu-  
ments, prove dates.'

'Why now indeed you throw your  
bonnet off

As if you had time left for a logarithm!  
The faith's the want. Dear cousin, give  
me faith,

And you shall walk this road with silken  
shoes,

As clean as any lady of our house  
Supposed the proudest. Oh, I com-  
prehend

The whole position from your point of  
sight.

I oust you from your father's halls and  
lands

And make you poor by getting rich—  
that's law;

Considering which, in common circum-  
stance,

You would not scruple to accept from me  
Some compensation, some sufficiency  
Of income—that were justice; but, alas,  
I love you,—that's mere nature; you  
reject

My love,—that's nature also; and at once  
You cannot, from a suitor disallowed,  
A hand thrown back as mine is, into yours  
Receive a doit, a farthing,—not for the  
world!

That's woman's etiquette, and obviously  
Exceeds the claim of nature, law, and right,  
Unanswerable to all. I grant, you see,  
The case as you conceive it,—leave you  
room

To sweep your ample skirts of womanhood,

While, standing humbly squeezed against the wall,

I own myself excluded from being just,  
Restrained from paying indubitable debts,

Because denied from giving you my soul.

That's my misfortune!—I submit to it  
As if, in some more reasonable age,

'T would not be less inevitable. Enough.  
You'll trust me, cousin, as a gentleman,

To keep your honour, as you count it,  
pure,

Your scruples (just as if I thought them  
wise)

Safe and inviolate from gifts of mine.'

I answered mild but earnest. 'I believe  
In no one's honour which another keeps,

Nor man's nor woman's. As I keep,  
myself,

My truth and my religion, I depute  
No father, though I had one this side

death,  
Nor brother, though I had twenty, much

less you,  
Though twice my cousin, and once

Romney Leigh,  
To keep my honour pure. You face,

to-day,  
A man who wants instruction, mark me,

not  
A woman who wants protection. As to

a man,  
Show manhood, speak out plainly, be

precise  
With facts and dates. My aunt inherited

This sum, you say—'  
'I said she died possessed

Of this, dear cousin.'

'Not by heritage.  
Thank you: we're getting to the facts

at last.  
Perhaps she played at commerce with

a ship  
Which came in heavy with Australian

gold?  
Or touched a lottery with her finger-end,

Which tumbled on a sudden into her lap  
Some old Rhine tower or principality?

Perhaps she had to do with a marine

Sub-transatlantic railroad, which pre-  
pays

As well as pre-supposes? or perhaps  
Some stale ancestral debt was after-paid

By a hundred years, and took her by  
surprise!—

You shake your head, my cousin; I guess  
ill.'

'You need not guess, Aurora, nor de-  
ride;

The truth is not afraid of hurting you.  
You'll find no cause, in all your scruples,

why  
Your aunt should cavil at a deed of gift

'Twixt her and me.'

'I thought so—ah! a gift.'

'You naturally thought so,' he resumed.  
'A very natural gift.'

'A gift, a gift!

Her individual life being stranded high  
Above all want, approaching opulence,

Too haughty was she to accept a gift  
Without some ultimate aim: ah, ah,

I see,—  
A gift intended plainly for her heirs,

And so accepted . . if accepted . . ah,  
Indeed that might be; I am snared

perhaps  
Just so. But, cousin, shall I pardon you,

If thus you have caught me with a cruel  
springe?'

He answered gently, 'Need you tremble  
and pant

Like a netted lioness? is't my fault, mine,  
That you're a grand wild creature of the

woods  
And hate the stall built for you? Anyway,

Though triply netted, need you glare at  
me?

I do not hold the cords of such a net;  
You're free from me, Aurora!'

'Now may God  
Deliver me from this strait! This gift

of yours  
Was tendered . . when? accepted . .

when?' I asked.  
'A month . . a fortnight since! Six

weeks ago  
It was not tendered; by a word she

dropped

I know it was not tendered nor received.  
When was it? bring your dates.'

'What matters when?  
A half-hour ere she died, or a half-year,  
Secured the gift, maintains the heritage  
Inviolable with law. As easy pluck  
The golden stars from heaven's embroidered stole

To pin them on the grey side of this earth,  
As make you poor again, thank God.'

'Not poor  
Nor clean again from henceforth, you  
thank God?

Well, sir—I ask you—I insist at need,—  
Vouchsafe the special date, the special  
date.'

'The day before her death-day,' he  
replied,

'The gift was in her hands. We'll  
find that deed,  
And certify that date to you.'

As one  
Who has climbed a mountain-height and  
carried up

His own heart climbing, panting in his  
throat

With the toil of the ascent, takes breath  
at last,

Looks back in triumph—so I stood and  
looked.

'Dear cousin Romney, we have reached  
the top

Of this steep question, and may rest,  
I think.

But first,—I pray you pardon, that the  
shock

And surge of natural feeling and event  
Has made me oblivious of acquainting you  
That this, this letter (unread, mark, still  
sealed),

Was found enfolded in the poor dead  
hand:

That spirit of hers had gone beyond the  
address,

Which could not find her though you  
wrote it clear,—

I know your writing, Romney,—recognize

The open-hearted A, the liberal sweep  
Of the G. Now listen,—let us understand:

You will not find that famous deed of gift,

Unless you find it in the letter here,  
Which, not being mine, I give you  
back.—Refuse

To take the letter? well then—you and I,  
As writer and as heiress, open it

Together, by your leave.—Exactly so:  
The words in which the noble offering's  
made

Are nobler still, my cousin; and, I own,  
The proudest and most delicate heart  
alive,

Distracted from the measure of the gift  
By such a grace in giving, might accept

Your largesse without thinking any more  
Of the burthen of it, than King Solomon

Considered, when he wore his holy ring  
Charactered over with the ineffable spell,

How many carats of fine gold made up  
Its money-value: so, Leigh gives to

Leigh!

Or rather, might have given, observe,—  
for that's

The point we come to. Here's a proof  
of gift,

But here's no proof, sir, of acceptancy,  
But rather, disproof. Death's black dust,  
being blown,

Infiltrated through every secret fold  
Of this sealed letter by a puff of fate,

Dried up for ever the fresh-written ink,  
Annulled the gift, disutilized the grace,

And left these fragments.'

As I spoke, I tore  
The paper up and down, and down and up

And crosswise, till it fluttered from my  
hands,

As forest-leaves, stripped suddenly and  
rapt

By a whirlwind on Valdarno, drop again,  
Drop slow, and strew the melancholy

ground  
Before the amazed hills . . . why, so,  
indeed,

I'm writing like a poet, somewhat large  
In the type of the image, and exaggerate

A small thing with a great thing,  
topping it:—

But then I'm thinking how his eyes  
looked, his,

With what despondent and surprised  
reproach!

I think the tears were in them as he  
looked;

I think the manly mouth just trembled.  
Then  
He broke the silence.

'I may ask, perhaps,  
Although no stranger . . . only Romney  
Leigh,  
Which means still less . . . than Vincent  
Carrington,  
Your plans in going hence, and where  
you go.  
This cannot be a secret.'

'All my life  
Is open to you, cousin. I go hence  
To London, to the gathering-place of  
souls,  
To live mine straight out, vocally, in  
books;  
Harmoniously for others, if indeed  
A woman's soul, like man's, be wide  
enough

To carry the whole octave (that's to  
prove)

Or, if I fail, still purely for myself.

Pray God be with me, Romney.'

'Ah, poor child,  
Who fight against the mother's 'tiring  
hand,

And choose the headsman's! May God  
change His world

For your sake, sweet, and make it mild  
as heaven,

And juster than I have found you.'

But I paused.

'And you, my cousin?'—

'I,' he said,—'you ask?  
You care to ask? Well, girls have  
curious minds

And fain would know the end of every-  
thing,

Of cousins therefore with the rest. For  
me,

Aurora, I've my work; you know my  
work;

And, having missed this year some  
personal hope,

I must beware the rather that I miss  
No reasonable duty. While you sing

Your happy pastorals of the meads and  
trees,

Bethink you that I go to impress and  
prove

On stifled brains and deafened ears,  
stunned deaf,

Crushed dull with grief, that nature  
sings itself,

And needs no mediate poet, lute or voice,  
To make it vocal. While you ask of men  
Your audience, I may get their leave  
perhaps

For hungry orphans to say audibly  
"We're hungry, see,"—for beaten and  
bullied wives

To hold their unweaned babies up in sight,  
Whom orphanage would better; and for  
all

To speak and claim their portion . . . by  
no means

Of the soil, . . . but of the sweat in tilling it;  
Since this is nowadays turned privilege.  
To have only God's curse on us, and  
not man's.

Such work I have for doing, elbow-deep  
In social problems,—as you tie your  
rimes,

To draw my uses to cohere with needs  
And bring the uneven world back to its  
round,

Or, failing so much, fill up, bridge at  
least

To smoothen issues some abysmal cracks  
And feuds of earth, intestine heats have  
made

To keep men separate,—using sorry shifts  
Of hospitals, almshouses, infant schools,  
And other practical stuff of partial good  
You lovers of the beautiful and whole  
Despise by system.'

'I despise? The scorn  
Is yours, my cousin. Poets become such  
Through scorning nothing. You decry  
them for

The good of beauty sung and taught by  
them,

While they respect your practical partial  
good

As being a part of beauty's self. Adieu!  
When God helps all the workers for His  
world,

The singers shall have help of Him,  
not last.'

He smiled as men smile when they will  
not speak

Because of something bitter in the  
thought;

And still I feel his melancholy eyes

Look judgement on me. It is seven  
years since :

I know not if 'twas pity or 'twas scorn  
Has made them so far-reaching : judge  
it ye

Who have had to do with pity more  
than love

And scorn than hatred. I am used,  
since then,

To other ways, from equal men. But so,  
Even so, we let go hands, my cousin and I,  
And, in between us, rushed the torrent-  
world

To blanch our faces like divided rocks,  
And bar for ever mutual sight and touch  
Except through swirl of spray and all  
that roar.

### THIRD BOOK

'To-day thou girdest up thy loins thyself  
And goest where thou wouldst :  
presently

Others shall gird thee,' said the Lord,  
'to go

Where thou wouldst not.' He spoke  
to Peter thus,

To signify the death which he should die  
When crucified head downward.

If He spoke  
To Peter then, He speaks to us the same ;  
The word suits many different martyr-  
doms,

And signifies a multiform of death,  
Although we scarcely die apostles, we,  
And have mislaid the keys of heaven  
and earth.

For 'tis not in mere death that men  
die most,

And, after our first girding of the loins  
In youth's fine linen and fair broidery  
To run up hill and meet the rising sun,  
We are apt to sit tired, patient as a fool,  
While others gird us with the violent  
bands

Of social figments, feints, and formalisms,  
Reversing our straight nature, lifting up  
Our base needs, keeping down our lofty  
thoughts,

Head downward on the cross-sticks of  
the world.

Yet He can pluck us from that shameful  
cross.

God, set our feet low and our forehead  
high,

And show us how a man was made to  
walk !

Leave the lamp, Susan, and go up to bed.  
The room does very well ; I have to  
write

Beyond the stroke of midnight. Get  
away ;

Your steps, for ever buzzing in the room,  
Tease me like gnats. Ah, letters ! throw  
them down

At once, as I must have them, to be  
sure,

Whether I bid you never bring me such  
At such an hour, or bid you. No excuse ;  
You choose to bring them, as I choose  
perhaps

To throw them in the fire. Now get  
to bed,

And dream, if possible, I am not cross.

Why what a pettish, petty thing I grow,—  
A mere, mere woman, a mere flaccid  
nerve,

A kerchief left out all night in the rain,  
Turned soft so,—overtasked and over-  
strained

And overlived in this close London life !  
And yet I should be stronger.

Never burn  
Your letters, poor Aurora ! for they stare  
With red seals from the table, saying  
each,

'Here 's something that you know not.'  
Out alas,

'Tis scarcely that the world's more good  
and wise

Or even straighter and more consequent  
Since yesterday at this time—yet, again,  
If but one angel spoke from Ararat

I should be very sorry not to hear :  
So open all the letters ! let me read.

Blanche Ord, the writer in the 'Lady's  
Fan,'

Requests my judgement on . . . that,  
afterwards.

Kate Ward desires the model of my cloak,  
And signs, 'Elisha to you.' Pringle  
Sharpe

Presents his work on 'Social Conduct,'  
 craves  
 A little money for his pressing debts . .  
 From me, who scarce have money for  
 my needs;  
 Art's fiery chariot which we journey in  
 Being apt to singe our singing-robos to  
 holes  
 Although you ask me for my cloak,  
 Kate Ward!  
 Here's Rudgely knows it,—editor and  
 scribe;  
 He's 'forced to marry where his heart  
 is not,  
 Because the purse lacks where he lost  
 his heart.'  
 Ah,—lost it because no one picked  
 it up;  
 That's really loss,—(and passable impu-  
 dence.)  
 My critic Hammond flatters prettily,  
 And wants another volume like the last.  
 My critic Belfair wants another book  
 Entirely different, which will sell (and  
 live!),  
 A striking book, yet not a startling book,  
 The public blames originalities  
 (You must not pump spring-water  
 unawares  
 Upon a gracious public full of nerves),  
 Good things, not subtle, new yet  
 orthodox,  
 As easy reading as the dog-eared page  
 That's fingered by said public fifty years,  
 Since first taught spelling by its grand-  
 mother,  
 And yet a revelation in some sort:  
 That's hard, my critic Belfair. So—  
 what next?  
 My critic Stokes objects to abstract  
 thoughts;  
 'Call a man, John, a woman, Joan,' says  
 he,  
 'And do not prate so of *humanities* :'  
 Whereat I call my critic simply, Stokes.  
 My critic Jobson recommends more mirth  
 Because a cheerful genius suits the times,  
 And all true poets laugh unquenchably  
 Like Shakespeare and the gods. That's  
 very hard.  
 The gods may laugh, and Shakespeare;  
 Dante smiled  
 With such a needy heart on two pale lips,

We cry, 'Weep rather, Dante.' Poems  
 are  
 Men, if true poems: and who dares  
 exclaim  
 At any man's door, 'Here, 'tis understood  
 The thunder fell last week and killed  
 a wife  
 And scared a sickly husband—what of  
 that?  
 Get up, be merry, shout and clap your  
 hands,  
 Because a cheerful genius suits the  
 times—'  
 None says so to the man, and why indeed  
 Should any to the poem? A ninth seal;  
 The apocalypse is drawing to a close.  
 Ha,—this from Vincent Carrington,—  
 'Dear friend,  
 I want good counsel. Will you lend  
 me wings  
 To raise me to the subject, in a sketch  
 I'll bring to-morrow—may I? at eleven?  
 A poet's only born to turn to use:  
 So save you! for the world . . and Car-  
 rington.'  
 ('Writ after.) Have you heard of  
 Romney Leigh,  
 Beyond what's said of him in newspapers,  
 His phalansteries there, his speeches  
 here,  
 His pamphlets, pleas, and statements,  
 everywhere?  
 He dropped *me* long ago, but no one  
 drops  
 A golden apple—though indeed one day  
 You hinted that, but jested. Well, at least  
 You know Lord Howe who sees him . .  
 whom he sees  
 And you see and I hate to see,—for Howe  
 Stands high upon the brink of theories,  
 Observes the swimmers and cries "Very  
 fine,"  
 But keeps dry linen equally,—unlike  
 That gallant breaster, Romney. Strange  
 it is,  
 Such sudden madness seizing a young man  
 To make earth over again,—while I'm  
 content  
 To make the pictures. Let me bring the  
 sketch.  
 A tiptoe Danae, overbold and hot,  
 Both arms a-flame to meet her wishing  
 Jove

Half-way, and burn him faster down;  
 the face  
 And breasts upturned and straining, the  
 loose locks  
 All glowing with the anticipated gold.  
 Or here's another on the self-same theme.  
 She lies here—flat upon her prison-floor,  
 The long hair swathed about her to the  
 heel  
 Like wet sea-weed. You dimly see her  
 through  
 The glittering haze of that prodigious rain,  
 Half blotted out of nature by a love  
 As heavy as fate. I'll bring you either  
 sketch.  
 I think, myself, the second indicates  
 More passion.  
 Surely. Self is put away,  
 And calm with abdication. She is Jove,  
 And no more Danae—greater thus.  
 Perhaps  
 The painter symbolizes unaware  
 Two states of the recipient artist-soul,  
 One, forward, personal, wanting rever-  
 ence,  
 Because aspiring only. We'll be calm,  
 And know that, when indeed our Joves  
 come down,  
 We all turn stiller than we have ever  
 been.  
 Kind Vincent Carrington. I'll let him  
 come.  
 He talks of Florence,—and may say a  
 word  
 Of something as it chanced seven years  
 ago,  
 A hedgehog in the path, or a lame bird,  
 In those green country walks, in that  
 good time  
 When certainly I was so miserable . .  
 I seem to have missed a blessing ever  
 since.  
 The music soars within the little lark,  
 And the lark soars. It is not thus with  
 men.  
 We do not make our places with our  
 strains,—  
 Content, while they rise, to remain be-  
 hind  
 Alone on earth instead of so in heaven.  
 No matter; I bear on my broken tale.

When Romney Leigh and I had parted  
 thus,  
 I took a chamber up three flights of stairs  
 Not far from being as steep as some larks  
 climb,  
 And there, in a certain house in Kensing-  
 ton,  
 Three years I lived and worked. Get  
 leave to work  
 In this world—'tis the best you get at all;  
 For God, in cursing, gives us better gifts  
 Than men in benediction. God says,  
 'Sweat  
 For foreheads,' men say 'crowns,' and  
 so we are crowned,  
 Aye, gashed by some tormenting circle  
 of steel  
 Which snaps with a secret spring. Get  
 work, get work;  
 Be sure 'tis better than what you work  
 to get.  
 Serene and unafraid of solitude  
 I worked the short days out,—and  
 • watched the sun  
 On lurid morns or monstrous afternoons  
 (Like some Druidic idol's fiery brass  
 With fixed unflinching outline of dead  
 heat,  
 From which the blood of wretches pent  
 inside  
 Seems oozing forth to incarnadine the air)  
 Push out through fog with his dilated disk,  
 And startle the slant roofs and chimney-  
 pots  
 With splashes of fierce colour. Or I saw  
 Fog only, the great tawny weltering fog,  
 Involve the passive city, strangle it  
 Alive, and draw it off into the void,  
 Spires, bridges, streets, and squares, as  
 if a sponge  
 Had wiped out London,—or as noon and  
 night  
 Had clapped together and utterly struck  
 out  
 The intermediate time, undoing them-  
 selves  
 In the act. Your city poets see such things  
 Not despicable. Mountains of the south,  
 When drunk and mad with elemental  
 wines  
 They rend the seamless mist and stand  
 up bare,

Make fewer singers, haply. No onesings,  
 Descending Sinai : on Parnassus-mount  
 You take a mule to climb and not a muse  
 Except in fable and figure : forests chant  
 Their anthems to themselves, and leave  
 you dumb.

But sit in London at the day's decline,  
 And view the city perish in the mist  
 Like Pharaoh's armaments in the deep  
 Red Sea,

The chariots, horsemen, footmen, all the  
 host,

Sucked down and choked to silence—  
 then, surprised

By a sudden sense of vision and of tune,  
 You feel as conquerors though you did  
 not fight,

And you and Israel's other singing girls,  
 Aye, Miriam with them, sing the song  
 you chose.

I worked with patience, which means  
 almost power :

I did some excellent things indifferently,  
 Some bad things excellently. Both  
 were praised,

The latter loudest. And by such a time  
 That I myself had set them down as  
 sins

Scarce worth the price of sackcloth,  
 week by week

Arrived some letter through the sedulous  
 post,

Like these I've read, and yet dissimilar,  
 With pretty maiden seals,—initials  
 twined

Of lilies, or a heart marked *Emily*  
 (Convicting Emily of being all heart) ;  
 Or rarer tokens from young bachelors,  
 Who wrote from college with the same  
 goosequill,

Suppose, they had just been plucked of,  
 and a snatch

From Horace, 'Collegisse juvat,' set  
 Upon the first page. Many a letter, signed  
 Or unsigned, showing the writers at  
 eighteen

Had lived too long, although a muse  
 should help

Their dawn by holding candles,—com-  
 pliments

To smile or sigh at. Such could pass  
 with me

No more than coins from Moscow cir-  
 culate

At Paris : would ten roubles buy a tag  
 Of ribbon on the boulevard, worth a sou ?  
 I smiled that all this youth should love  
 me,—sighed

That such a love could scarcely raise  
 them up

To love what was more worthy than  
 myself ;

Then sighed again, again, less generously,  
 To think the very love they lavished so

Proved me inferior. The strong loved  
 me not,

And he . . . my cousin Romney . . . did  
 not write.

I felt the silent finger of his scorn

Prick every bubble of my frivolous fame  
 As my breath blew it, and resolve it back

To the air it came from. Oh, I justified  
 The measure he had taken of my height :

The thing was plain—he was not wrong  
 a line ;

I played at art, made thrusts with a toy-  
 sword,

Amused the lads and maidens.

Came a sigh  
 Deep, hoarse with resolution,—I would  
 work

To better ends, or play in earnest.  
 'Heavens,

I think I should be almost popular  
 If this went on !—I ripped my verses up,

And found no blood upon the rapier's  
 point ;

The heart in them was just an embryo's  
 heart

Which never yet had beat, that it should  
 die ;

Just gasps of make-believe galvanic life ;  
 Mere tones, inorganized to any tune.

And yet I felt it in me where it burnt,  
 Like those hot fire-seeds of creation held

In Jove's clenched palm before the worlds  
 were sown,—

But I—I was not Juno even ! my hand  
 Was shut in weak convulsion, woman's

ill,  
 And when I yearned to loose a finger—lo,

The nerve revolted. 'Tis the same even  
 now :

This hand may never, haply, open large,

Before the spark is quenched, or the  
palm charred,  
To prove the power not else than by the  
pain.

It burns, it burnt—my whole life burnt  
with it,

And light, not sunlight and not torch-  
light, flashed

My steps out through the slow and  
difficult road.

I had grown distrustful of too forward  
Springs,

The season's books in drear significance  
Of morals, dropping round me. Lively  
books!

The ash has livelier verdure than the yew;  
And yet the yew's green longer, and alone  
Found worthy of the holy Christmastime:  
We'll plant more yews if possible, albeit  
We plant the graveyards with them.

Day and night  
I worked my rhythmic thought, and  
furrowed up

Both watch and slumber with long lines  
of life

Which did not suit their season. The  
rose fell

From either cheek, my eyes globed  
luminous

Through orbits of blue shadow, and my  
pulse

Would shudder along the purple-veined  
wrist

Like a shot bird. Youth's stern, set  
face to face

With youth's ideal: and when people  
came

And said, 'You work too much, you are  
looking ill,'

I smiled for pity of them who pitied me,  
And thought I should be better soon  
perhaps

For those ill looks. Observe—'I'  
means in youth

Just I, the conscious and eternal soul  
With all its ends, and not the outside life,

The parcel-man, the doublet of the flesh,  
The so much liver, lung, integument,

Which make the sum of 'I' hereafter  
when

World-talkers talk of doing well or ill.  
I prosper if I gain a step, although

A nail then pierced my foot: although  
my brain

Embracing any truth froze paralysed,  
I prosper: I but change my instrument;

I break the spade off, digging deep for  
gold,

And catch the mattock up.  
I worked on, on.

Through all the bristling fence of nights  
and days

Which hedges time in from the eternities,  
I struggled,—never stopped to note the  
stakes

Which hurt me in my course. The mid-  
night oil

Would stink sometimes; there came  
some vulgar needs:

I had to live that therefore I might work,  
And, being but poor, I was constrained,  
for life,

To work with one hand for the booksellers  
While working with the other for myself

And art: you swim with feet as well as  
hands,

Or make small way. I apprehended  
this,—

In England no one lives by verse that lives;  
And, apprehending, I resolved by prose

To make a space to sphere my living verse.  
I wrote for cyclopaedias, magazines,

And weekly papers, holding up my name  
To keep it from the mud. I learnt the use

Of the editorial 'we' in a review  
As courtly ladies the fine trick of trains,

And swept it grandly through the open  
doors

As if one could not pass through doors at all  
Save so encumbered. I wrote tales beside,

Carved many an article on cherry-stones  
To suit light readers,—something in the  
lines

Revealing, it was said, the mallet-hand,  
But that, I'll never vouch for: what you  
do

For bread, will taste of common grain,  
not grapes,

Although you have a vineyard in Cham-  
pagne;

Much less in Nephelococcygia  
As mine was, peradventure.

Having bread  
For just so many days, just breathing-  
room

For body and verse, I stood up straight  
and worked

My veritable work. And as the soul  
Which grows within a child makes the  
child grow,—

Or as the fiery sap, the touch from God,  
Careering through a tree, dilates the bark  
And roughs with scale and knob, before  
it strikes

The summer foliage out in a green  
flame—

So life, in deepening with me, deepened  
all

The course I took, the work I did. Indeed  
The academic law convinced of sin ;

The critics cried out on the falling off,  
Regretting the first manner. But I felt  
My heart's life throbbing in my verse to  
show

It lived, it also—certes incomplete,  
Disordered with all Adam in the blood,  
But even its very tumours, warts and wens  
Still organized by and implying life.

A lady called upon me on such a day.  
She had the low voice of your English  
dames,

Unused, it seems, to need rise half a note  
To catch attention,—and their quiet  
mood,

As if they lived too high above the earth  
For that to put them out in anything :

So gentle, because verily so proud ;  
So wary and afraid of hurting you,  
By no means that you are not really vile,  
But that they would not touch you with  
their foot

To push you to your place ; so self-  
possessed

Yet gracious and conciliating, it takes  
An effort in their presence to speak  
truth :

You know the sort of woman,—brilliant  
stuff,

And out of nature. 'Lady Waldemar.'  
She said her name quite simply, as if it  
meant

Not much indeed, but something,—took  
my hands,

And smiled as if her smile could help my  
case,

And dropped her eyes on me and let  
them melt.

'Is this,' she said, 'the Muse?'

'No sibyl even,'

I answered, 'since she fails to guess the  
cause

Which taxed you with this visit, madam.'  
'Good,'

She said, 'I value what 's sincere at once.  
Perhaps if I had found a literal Muse,  
The visit might have taxed me. As it is,  
You wear your blue so chiefly in your  
eyes,

My fair Aurora, in a frank good way,  
It comforts me entirely for your fame,  
As well as for the trouble of ascent  
To this Olympus.'

There, a silver laugh  
Ran rippling through her quickened  
little breaths

The steep stair somewhat justified.

'But still  
Your ladyship has left me curious why  
You dared the risk of finding the said  
Muse?'

'Ah,—keep me, notwithstanding, to the  
point,

Like any pedant? Is the blue in eyes  
As awful as in stockings after all,  
I wonder, that you'd have my business  
out

Before I breathe—exact the epic plunge  
In spite of gasps? Well, naturally you  
think

I've come here, as the lion-hunters go  
To deserts, to secure you with a trap  
For exhibition in my drawing-rooms  
On zoologic soirées? not in the least.

Roar softly at me ; I am frivolous,  
I dare say ; I have played at wild-beast  
shows

Like other women of my class,—but  
now

I meet my lion simply as Androcles  
Met his . . when at his mercy.'

So, she bent  
Her head, as queens may mock,—then  
lifting up

Her eyelids with a real grave queenly  
look,

Which ruled and would not spare, not  
even herself,—

'I think you have a cousin :—Romney  
I wish'

'You bring a word from *him*?'—my  
eyes leapt up  
To the very height of hers,—'a word  
from *him*!'

'I bring a word about him, actually.  
But first' (she pressed me with her  
urgent eyes),  
'You do not love him,—you?'  
'You're frank at least  
In putting questions, madam,' I replied;  
'I love my cousin cousinly—no more.'

'I guessed as much. I'm ready to be  
frank  
In answering also, if you'll question me,  
Or even for something less. You stand  
outside,  
You artist women, of the common sex;  
You share not with us, and exceed us so  
Perhaps by what you're mulcted in,  
your hearts  
Being starved to make your heads: so  
run the old  
Traditions of you. I can therefore speak  
Without the natural shame which crea-  
tures feel  
When speaking on their level, to their  
like.

There's many a papist she, would rather  
die  
Than own to her maid she put a ribbon on  
To catch the indifferent eye of such a  
man,  
Who yet would count adulteries on her  
beads

At holy Mary's shrine and never blush;  
Because the saints are so far off, we lose  
All modesty before them. Thus, to-day.  
'Tis I, love Romney Leigh.'

'Forbear,' I cried.  
'If here's no muse, still less is any saint;  
Nor even a friend, that Lady Waldemar  
Should make confessions' . . .

'That's unkindly said.  
If no friend, what forbids to make a friend  
To join to our confession ere we have  
done?

I love your cousin. If it seems unwise  
To say so, it's still foolisher (we're  
frank)  
To feel so. My first husband left me  
young,

And pretty enough, so please you, and  
rich enough,  
To keep my booth in May-fair with the  
rest

To happy issues. There are marquises  
Would serve seven years to call me  
wife, I know,  
And, after seven, I might consider it,  
For there's some comfort in a marquise  
When all's said,—yes, but after the  
seven years;

I, now, love Romney. You put up your  
lip,  
So like a Leigh! so like him!—Pardon  
me,

I'm well aware I do not derogate  
In loving Romney Leigh. The name is  
good,

The means are excellent, but the man,  
the man—

Heaven help us both,—I am near as  
mad as he,

In loving such an one.'

She slowly swung  
Her heavy ringlets till they touched her  
smile,

As reasonably sorry for herself,  
And thus continued.

'Of a truth, Miss Leigh,  
I have not, without struggle, come to this.  
I took a master in the German tongue,  
I gamed a little, went to Paris twice;  
But, after all, this love! . . . you eat of  
love,

And do as vile a thing as if you ate  
Of garlic—which, whatever else you eat,  
Tastes uniformly acrid, till your peach  
Reminds you of your onion. Am I  
coarse?

Well, love's coarse, nature's coarse—  
ah, there's the rub!

We fair fine ladies, who park out our lives  
From common sheep-paths, cannot help  
the crows

From flying over,—we're as natural still  
As Blowsalinda. Drape us perfectly  
In Lyons' velvet,—we are not, for that,  
Lay-figures, look you: we have hearts  
within,

Warm, live, improvident, indecent  
hearts,

As ready for outrageous ends and acts  
As any distressed sempstress of them all

That Romney groans and toils for. We  
catch love

And other fevers, in the vulgar way :  
Love will not be outwitted by our wit,  
Nor outrun by our equipages :—mine  
Persisted, spite of efforts. All my cards  
Turned up but Romney Leigh ; my  
German stopped

At germane Wertherism ; my Paris  
rounds

Returned me from the Champs Elysées  
just

A ghost, and sighing like Dido's. I  
came home

Uncured,—convicted rather to myself  
Of being in 'love . . . in love ! That's  
coarse, you'll say.

I'm talking garlic.'

Coldly I replied.

'Apologize for atheism, not love !

For me, I do believe in love, and God.  
I know my cousin : Lady Waldemar  
I know not : yet I say as much as this ;  
Whoever loves him, let her not excuse  
But cleanse herself, that, loving such  
a man,

She may not do it with such unworthy  
love

He cannot stoop and take it.'

'That is said

Austerely, like a youthful prophetess,  
Who knits her brows across her pretty  
eyes

To keep them back from following the  
grey flight

Of doves between the temple-columns.  
Dear,

Be kinder with me ; let us two be friends.  
I'm a mere woman,—the more weak  
perhaps

Through being so proud ; you're better ;  
as for him,

He's best. Indeed he builds his good-  
ness up

So high, it topples down to the other side  
And makes a sort of badness ; there's  
the worst

I have to say against your cousin's best !  
And so be mild, Aurora, with my worst  
For his sake, if not mine.'

'I own myself

Incredulous of confidence like this  
Availing him or you.'

'And I, myself,  
Of being worthy of him with any love :  
In your sense I am not so—let it pass.  
And yet I save him if I marry him ;  
Let that pass too.'

'Pass, pass ! we play police  
Upon my cousin's life, to indicate  
What may or may not pass ?' I cried.

'He knows

What's worthy of him ; the choice re-  
mains with *him* ;

And what he chooses, act or wife, I think  
I shall not call unworthy, I, for one.'

'Tis somewhat rashly said,' she an-  
swered slow ;

'Now let's talk reason, though we talk  
of love.

Your cousin Romney Leigh's a monster ;  
there,

The word's out fairly, let me prove the  
fact.

We'll take, say, that most perfect of  
antiques

They call the Genius of the Vatican,  
(Which seems too beauteous to endure  
itself

In this mixed world,) and fasten it for  
once

Upon the torso of the Dancing Fawn,  
(Who might limp surely, if he did not  
dance,)

Instead of Buonarroti's mask : what then ?  
We show the sort of monster Romney is,  
With god-like virtues and heroic aims  
Subjoined to limping possibilities

Of misshapen human nature. Grant the  
man

Twice godlike, twice heroic,—still he  
limps,

And here 's the point we come to.'

'Pardon me,

But, Lady Waldemar, the point's the  
thing

We never come to.'

'Caustic, insolent

At need ! I like you'—(there, she took  
my hands)

'And now my lioness, help Androcles,  
For all your roaring. Help me ! for  
myself

I would not say so—but for him. He  
limps

So certainly, he'll fall into the pit  
A week hence,—so I lose him—so he is  
lost!

For when he's fairly married, he a Leigh,  
To a girl of doubtful life, undoubtful birth,  
Starved out in London till her coarse-  
grained hands

Are whiter than her morals,—even you  
May call his choice unworthy.'

'Married! lost!  
He, . . . Romney!'

'Ah, you're moved at last,' she said.  
'These monsters, set out in the open sun,  
Of course throw monstrous shadows:  
those who think

Awry, will scarce act straightly. Who  
but he?

And who but you can wonder? He  
has been mad,  
The whole world knows, since first,  
a nominal man,

He soured the proctors, tried the gowns-  
men's wits,

With equal scorn of triangles and wine,  
And took no honours, yet was honourable.  
They'll tell you he lost count of Homer's  
ships

In Melbourne's poor-bills, Ashley's fac-  
tory bills,—

Ignored the Aspasia we all dare to praise,  
For other women, dear, we could not  
name

Because we're decent. Well, he had  
some right

On his side probably; men always have,  
Whogo absurdly wrong. The living boor  
Who brews your ale, exceeds in vital  
worth

Dead Caesar who "stops bungholes" in  
the cask;

And also, to do good is excellent,  
For persons of his income, even to boors:  
I sympathize with all such things. But he  
Went mad upon them . . . madder and  
more mad

From college times to these,—as, going  
down hill,

The faster still, the farther. You must  
know

Your Leigh by heart. he has sown his  
black young curls

With bleaching cares of half a million men  
Already. If you do not starve, or sin,

You're nothing to him: pay the income-  
tax

And break your heart upon 't, he'll  
scarce be touched;

But come upon the parish, qualified  
For the parish stocks, and Romney will  
be there

To call you brother. sister, or perhaps  
A tenderer name still. Had I any chance  
With Mister Leigh, who am Lady  
Waldemar

And never committed felony?'  
'You speak  
Too bitterly,' I said, 'for the literal truth.'

'The truth is bitter. Here's a man who  
looks

For ever on the ground! you must below,  
Or else a pictured ceiling overhead,  
Good painting thrown away. For me,  
I've done

What women may, we're somewhat  
limited,

We modest women, but I've done my  
best.

—How men are perjured when they  
swear our eyes

Have meaning in them! they're just  
blue or brown,

They just can drop their lids a little.  
And yet

Mine did more, for I read half Fourier  
through,

Proudhon, Considérant, and Louis Blanc,  
With various others of his socialists,

And, if I had been a fathom less in love,  
Had cured myself with gaping. As it was,  
I quoted from them prettily enough

Perhaps, to make them sound half  
rational

To a saner man than he whene'er we  
talked

(For which I dodged occasion)—learnt  
by heart

His speeches in the Commons and else-  
where

Upon the social question; heaped reports  
Of wicked women and penitentiaries

On all my tables (with a place for Sue),  
And gave my name to swell subscription-  
lists

Toward keeping up the sun at nights in  
heaven,

And other possible ends. All things  
I did,  
Except the impossible . . . such as  
wearing gowns  
Provided by the Ten Hours' movement:  
there,  
I stopped—we must stop somewhere.  
He, meanwhile,  
Unmoved as the Indian tortoise 'neath  
the world,  
Let all that noise go on upon his back:  
He would not disconcert or throw me  
out,  
'Twas well to see a woman of my class  
With such a dawn of conscience. For  
the heart,  
Made firewood for his sake, and flaming  
up  
To his face,—he merely warmed his  
feet at it:  
Just designed to let my carriage stop him  
short  
In park or street,—he leaning on the door  
With news of the committee which sate  
last  
On pickpockets at suck.'

'You jest—you jest.'

'As martyrs jest, dear (if you read  
their lives),  
Upon the axe which kills them. When  
all's done  
By me, . . . for him—you'll ask him  
presently  
The colour of my hair—he cannot tell,  
Or answers "dark" at random; while,  
be sure,  
He's absolute on the figure, five or ten,  
Of my last subscription. Is it bearable,  
And I a woman?'

'Is it reparable,  
Though I were a man?'

'I know not. That's to prove.  
But first, this shameful marriage?'

'Aye?' I cried,  
'Then really there's a marriage?'

'Yesterday  
I held him fast upon it. "Mister Leigh,"  
Said I, "shut up a thing, it makes more  
noise.

The boiling town keeps secrets ill;  
I've known

Yours since last week. Forgive my  
knowledge so:

You feel I'm not the woman of the world  
The world thinks; you have borne  
with me before,

And used me in your noble work, our  
work,

And now you shall not cast me off because  
You're at the difficult point, the *join*.

'Tis true  
Even I can scarce admit the cogency  
Of such a marriage . . . where you do  
not love

(Except the class), yet marry and throw  
your name

Down to the gutter, for a fire-escape  
To future generations! 'tis sublime,  
A great example, a true Genesis

Of the opening social era. But take heed,  
This virtuous act must have a patent  
weight,

Or loses half its virtue. Make it tell,  
Interpret it, and set it in the light,  
And do not muffle it in a winter-cloak

As a vulgar bit of shame,—as if, at best,  
A Leigh had made a misalliance and  
blushed

A Howard should know it." Then,  
I pressed him more:

"He would not choose," I said, "that  
even his kin, . . .

Aurora Leigh, even . . . should conceive  
his act

Less sacrifice, more fantasy." At which  
He grew so pale, dear, . . . to the lips,  
I knew

I had touched him. "Do you know her,"  
he inquired,

"My cousin Aurora?" "Yes," I said,  
and lied,

(But truly we all know you by your books)  
And so I offered to come straight to you,  
Explain the subject, justify the cause,

And take you with me to St. Margaret's  
Court

To see this miracle, this Marian Erle,  
This drover's daughter (she's not pretty,  
he swears)

Upon whose finger, exquisitely pricked  
By a hundred needles, we're to hang  
the tie

'Twixt class and class in England,—thus  
indeed

By such a presence, yours and mine, to  
 lift  
 The match up from the doubtful place.  
 At once  
 He thanked me sighing, murmured to  
 himself  
 "She'll do it perhaps, she's noble,"—  
 thanked me twice,  
 And promised, as my guerdon, to put off  
 His marriage for a month.'  
 I answered then.  
 'I understand your drift imperfectly.  
 You wish to lead me to my cousin's  
 betrothed,  
 To touch her hand if worthy, and hold  
 her hand  
 If feeble, thus to justify his match.  
 So be it then. But how this serves  
 your ends,  
 And how the strange confession of your  
 love  
 Serves this, I have to learn—I cannot see.'

She knit her restless forehead. 'Then,  
 despite,  
 Aurora, that most radiant morning name,  
 You're dull as any London afternoon.  
 I wanted time, and gained it,—wanted  
 you,  
 And gain you! you will come and see  
 the girl  
 In whose most prodigal eyes the lineal  
 pearl  
 And pride of all your lofty race of  
 Leighs  
 Is destined to solution. Authorized  
 By sight and knowledge, then, you'll  
 speak your mind,  
 And prove to Romney, in your brilliant  
 way,  
 He'll wrong the people and posterity,  
 (Say such a thing is bad for me and  
 you,  
 And you fail utterly,) by concluding  
 thus  
 An execrable marriage. Break it up,  
 Disroot it—peradventure presently  
 We'll plant a better fortune in its place.  
 Be good to me, Aurora, scorn me less  
 For saying the thing I should not.  
 Well I know  
 I should not. I have kept, as others  
 have,

The iron rule of womanly reserve  
 In lip and life, till now : I wept a week  
 Before I came here.'—Ending, she was  
 pale ;  
 The last words, haughtily said, were  
 tremulous.  
 This palfrey pranced in harness, arched  
 her neck,  
 And, only by the foam upon the bit,  
 You saw she champed against it.  
 Then I rose.  
 'I love love : truth's no cleaner thing  
 than love.  
 I comprehend a love so fiery hot  
 It burns its natural veil of august shame,  
 And stands sublimely in the nude, as  
 chaste  
 As Medicean Venus. But I know,  
 A love that burns through veils will  
 burn through masks  
 And shrivel up treachery. What, love  
 and lie !  
 Nay—go to the opera ! your love's  
 curable.'

'I love and lie ?' she said—'I lie, for-  
 sooth !'  
 And beat her taper foot upon the floor,  
 And smiled against the shoe,—'You're  
 hard, Miss Leigh,  
 Unversed in current phrases.—Bowling-  
 greens  
 Of poets are fresher than the world's  
 highways :  
 Forgive me that I rashly blew the dust,  
 Which dims our hedges even, in your  
 eyes,  
 And vexed you so much. You find,  
 probably,  
 No-evil in this marriage,—rather good  
 Of innocence, to pastoralize in song :  
 You'll give the bond your signature,  
 perhaps,  
 Beneath the lady's mark,—indifferent  
 That Romney chose a wife could write  
 her name,  
 In witnessing he loved her.'  
 'Loved !' I cried ;  
 'Who tells you that he wants a wife to  
 love ?  
 He gets a horse to use, not love, I think :  
 There's work for wives as well,—and  
 after, straw,

When men are liberal. For myself, you  
err

Supposing power in me to break this  
match.

I could not do it, to save Romney's life,  
And would not, to save mine.'

'You take it so.'

She said, 'farewell, then. Write your  
books in peace,

As far as may be for some secret stir  
Now obvious to me,—for, most obviously,  
In coming hither I mistook the way.'

Whereat she touched my hand and bent  
her head,

And floated from me like a silent cloud  
That leaves the sense of thunder.

I drew breath,

Opressed in my deliverance. After all  
This woman breaks her social system up  
For love, so counted—the love possible  
To such,—and lilies are still lilies, pulled  
By smutty hands, though spotted from  
their white;

And thus she is better haply, of her kind,  
Than Romney Leigh, who lives by dia-  
grams,

And crosses out the spontaneities  
Of all his individual, personal life  
With formal universals. As if man  
Were set upon a high stool at a desk  
To keep God's books for Him in red  
and black,

And feel by millions! What, if even God  
Were chiefly God by living out Himself  
To an individualism of the Infinite,  
Eterne, intense, profuse,—still throwing  
up

The golden spray of multitudinous worlds  
In measure to the proclive weight and  
rush

Of His inner nature,—the spontaneous  
love

Still proof and outflow of spontaneous  
life!

Then live, Aurora.

Two hours afterward,

Within St. Margaret's Court I stood  
alone,

Close-veiled. A sick child, from an ague-  
fit,

Whose wasted right hand gambled  
'gainst his left

With an old brass button in a blot of sun,

Jeered weakly at me as I passed across  
The uneven pavement; while a woman,  
rouged

Upon the angular cheek-bones, kerchief  
torn,

Thin dangling locks, and flat lascivious  
mouth,

Cursed at a window both ways, in and out,  
By turns some bed-ridden creature and my-  
self,—

'Lie still there, mother! liker the dead  
dog

You'll be to-morrow. What, we pick  
our way,

Fine madam, with those damnable small  
feet!

We cover up our face from doing good,  
As if it were our purse! What brings  
you here,

My lady! is't to find my gentleman  
Who visits his tame pigeon in the eaves?  
Our cholera catch you with its cramps  
and spasms,

And tumble up your good clothes, veil  
and all,

And turn your whiteness dead-blue.'  
I looked up;

I think I could have walked through hell  
that day,

And never flinched. 'The dear Christ  
comfort you,'

I said, 'you must have been most miser-  
able,

To be so cruel,'—and I emptied out  
My purse upon the stones: when, as I  
had cast

The last charm in the cauldron, the  
whole court

Went boiling, bubbling up, from all its  
doors

And windows, with a hideous wail of  
laughs

And roar of oaths, and blows perhaps..  
I passed

Too quickly for distinguishing.. and  
pushed

A little side-door hanging on a hinge,  
And plunged into the dark, and groped  
and climbed

The long, steep, narrow stair 'twixt  
broken rail

And mildewed wall that let the plaster  
drop

To startle me in the blackness. Still,  
up, up!  
So high lived Romney's bride. I paused  
at last  
Before a low door in the roof, and  
knocked;  
There came an answer like a hurried  
dove—  
'So soon? can that be Mister Leigh?  
so soon?'  
And, as I entered, an ineffable face  
Met mine upon the threshold. 'Oh,  
not you,  
Not you!'—the dropping of the voice  
implied,  
'Then, if not you, for me not any one.'  
I looked her in the eyes, and held her  
hands,  
And said, 'I am his cousin,—Romney  
Leigh's;  
And here I come to see my cousin too.'  
She touched me with her face and with  
her voice,  
This daughter of the people. Such soft  
flowers,  
From such rough roots? the people,  
under there,  
Can sin so, curse so, look so, smell so...  
faugh!  
Yet have such daughters?  
Nowise beautiful  
Was Marian Erle. She was not white  
nor brown,  
But could look either, like a mist that  
changed  
According to being shone on more or less:  
The hair, too, ran its opulence of curls  
In doubt 'twixt dark and bright, nor left  
you clear  
To name the colour. Too much hair  
perhaps  
(I'll name a fault here) for so small a head,  
Which seemed to droop on that side and  
on this,  
As a full-blown rose uneasy with its  
weight  
Though not a wind should trouble it.  
Again,  
The dimple in the cheek had better gone  
With redder, fuller rounds; and some-  
what large  
The mouth was, though the milky little  
teeth

Dissolved it to so infantine a smile.  
For soon it smiled at me; the eyes  
smiled too,  
But 'twas as if remembering they had  
wept,  
And knowing they should, some day,  
weep again.

We talked. She told me all her story out,  
Which I'll re-tell with fuller utterance,  
As coloured and confirmed in aftertimes  
By others and herself too. Marian Erle  
Was born upon the ledge of Malvern Hill  
To eastward, in a hut built up at night  
To evade the landlord's eye, of mud and  
turf,  
Still liable, if once he looked that way,  
To being straight levelled, scattered by  
his foot,  
Like any other anthill. Born, I say;  
God sent her to His world, commissioned  
right,  
Her human testimonials fully signed,  
Not scant in soul—complete in linea-  
ments;  
But others had to swindle her a place  
To wail in when she had come. No  
place for her,  
By man's law! born an outlaw, was  
this babe;  
Her first cry in our strange and strang-  
ling air,  
When cast in spasms out by the shud-  
dering womb,  
Was wrong against the social code,—  
forced wrong:—  
What business had the baby to cry there!

I tell her story and grow passionate.  
She, Marian, did not tell it so, but used  
Meek words that made no wonder of  
herself  
For being so sad a creature. 'Mister  
Leigh  
Considered truly that such things should  
change.  
They *will*, in heaven—but meantime, on  
the earth,  
There's none can like a nettle as a pink,  
Except himself. We're nettles, some  
of us,  
And give offence by the act of spring-  
ing up;

And, if we leave the damp side of the wall,  
 The hoes, of course, are on us.' So she said.  
 Her father earned his life by random jobs  
 Despised by steadier workmen—keeping swine  
 On commons, picking hops, or hurrying on  
 The harvest at wet seasons, or, at need,  
 Assisting the Welsh drovers, when a drove  
 Of startled horses plunged into the mist  
 Below the mountain-road, and sowed the wind  
 With wandering neighings. In between the gaps  
 Of such irregular work, he drank and slept,  
 And cursed his wife because, the pence being out,  
 She could not buy more drink. At which she turned  
 (The worm), and beat her baby in revenge  
 For her own broken heart. There's not a crime  
 But takes its proper change out still in crime  
 If once rung on the counter of this world :  
 Let sinners look to it.  
 Yet the outcast child,  
 For whom the very mother's face forewent  
 The mother's special patience, lived and grew ;  
 Learnt early to cry low, and walk alone,  
 With that pathetic vacillating roll .  
 Of the infant body on the uncertain feet  
 (The earth being felt unstable ground so soon),  
 At which most women's arms unclosed at once  
 With irrepressible instinct. Thus, at three,  
 This poor weaned kid would run off from the fold,  
 This babe would steal off from the mother's chair,  
 And, creeping through the golden walls of gorse,  
 Would find some keyhole toward the secrecy  
 Of Heaven's high blue, and, nestling down, peer out—  
 Oh, not to catch the angels at their games,  
 She had never heard of angels,—but to gaze  
 She knew not why, to see she knew not what,  
 A-hungering outward from the barren earth  
 For something like a joy. She liked, she said.  
 To dazzle black her sight against the sky.  
 For then, it seemed, some grand blind Love came down,  
 And groped her out, and clasped her with a kiss ;  
 She learnt God that way, and was beat for it  
 Whenever she went home,—yet came again,  
 As surely as the trapped hare, getting free,  
 Returns to his form. This grand blind Love, she said,  
 This skyey father and mother both in one,  
 Instructed her and civilized her more  
 Than even Sunday-school did afterward,  
 To which a lady sent her to learn books  
 And sit upon a long bench in a row  
 With other children. Well, she laughed sometimes  
 To see them laugh and laugh and maul their texts ;  
 But after she was sorrowful with noise  
 And wondered if their mothers beat them hard  
 That ever they should laugh so. There was one  
 She loved indeed,—Rose Bell, a seven years' child  
 So pretty and clever, who read syllables  
 When Marian was at letters ; she would laugh  
 At nothing—hold your finger up, she laughed,  
 Then shook her curls down over eyes and mouth  
 To hide her make-mirth from the school-master :  
 And Rose's pelting glee, as frank as rain  
 On cherry-blossoms, brightened Marian too,  
 To see another merry whom she loved.

She whispered once (the children side  
 by side,  
 With mutual arms entwined about their  
 necks)  
 'Your mother lets you laugh so!' 'Aye,'  
 said Rose,  
 'She lets me. She was dug into the  
 ground  
 Six years since, I being but a yearling  
 wean.  
 Such mothers let us play and lose our  
 time,  
 And never scold nor beat us! don't you  
 wish  
 You had one like that!' There, Marian  
 breaking off  
 Looked suddenly in my face. 'Poor  
 Rose,' said she,  
 'I heard her laugh last night in Oxford  
 Street.  
 I'd pour out half my blood to stop that  
 laugh.  
 Poor Rose, poor Rose!' said Marian.  
 She resumed.  
 It tried her, when she had learnt at  
 Sunday-school  
 What God was, what He wanted from  
 us all,  
 And how in choosing sin we vexed the  
 Christ,  
 To go straight home and hear her father  
 pull  
 The Name down on us from the thunder-  
 shelf,  
 Then drink away his soul into the  
 dark  
 From seeing judgement. Father, mother,  
 home,  
 Were God and heaven reversed to her:  
 the more  
 She knew of Right, the more she guessed  
 their wrong;  
 Her price paid down for knowledge,  
 was to know  
 The vileness of her kindred: through  
 her heart,  
 Her filial and tormented heart, hence-  
 forth,  
 They struck their blows at virtue. Oh,  
 'tis hard  
 To learn you have a father up in heaven  
 By a gathering certain sense of being,  
 on earth,

Still worse than orphaned: 'tis too heavy  
 a grief,  
 The having to thank God for such a joy!  
 And so passed Marian's life from year  
 to year.  
 Her parents took her with them when  
 they tramped,  
 Dodged lanes and heath, frequented  
 towns and fairs,  
 And once went farther and saw Man-  
 chester,  
 And once the sea, that blue end of the  
 world,  
 That fair scroll-finis of a wicked book,—  
 And twice a prison,—back at intervals,  
 Returning to the hills. Hills draw like  
 heaven,  
 And stronger sometimes, holding out  
 their hands  
 To pull you from the vile flats up to them.  
 And though perhaps these strollers still  
 strolled back,  
 As sheep do, simply that they knew the  
 way,  
 They certainly felt bettered unaware  
 Emerging from the social smut of towns  
 To wipe their feet clean on the mountain  
 turf.  
 In which long wanderings, Marian lived  
 and learned,  
 Endured and learned. The people on  
 the roads  
 Would stop and ask her why her eyes  
 outgrew  
 Her cheeks, and if she meant to lodge  
 the birds  
 In all that hair; and then they lifted her,  
 The miller in his cart, a mile or twain,  
 The butcher's boy on horseback. Often too  
 The pedlar stopped, and tapped her on  
 the head  
 With absolute forefinger, brown and  
 ringed,  
 And asked if per adventure she could read,  
 And when she answered 'aye,' would  
 toss her down  
 Some stray odd volume from his heavy  
 pack,  
 A Thomson's Seasons, mulcted of the  
 Spring,  
 Or half a play of Shakespeare's, torn  
 across,

(She had to guess the bottom of a page  
By just the top sometimes,—as difficult,  
As, sitting on the moon, to guess the  
earth!)

Or else a sheaf of leaves (for that small  
Ruth's

Small gleanings) torn out from the heart  
of books,

From Churchyard Elegies and Edens  
Lost,

From Burns, and Bunyan, Selkirk, and  
Tom Jones,—

'Twas somewhat hard to keep the things  
distinct,

And oft the jangling influence jarred the  
child

Like looking at a sunset full of grace  
Through a pothouse window while the  
drunken oaths

Went on behind her. But she weeded out  
Her book-leaves, threw away the leaves  
that hurt

(First tore them small, that none should  
find a word),

And made a nosegay of the sweet and  
good

To fold within her breast, and pore upon  
At broken moments of the noontide glare,  
When leave was given her to untie her  
cloak

And rest upon the dusty highway's bank  
From the road's dust: or oft, the journey  
done,

Some city friend would lead her by the  
hand

To hear a lecture at an institute.  
And thus she had grown, this Marian  
Erle of ours,

To no book-learning,—she was ignorant  
Of authors,—not in earshot of the things  
Outspoken o'er the heads of common men  
By men who are uncommon,—but within  
The cadenced hum of such, and capable  
Of catching from the fringes of the wind  
Some fragmentary phrases, here and  
there,

Of that fine music, which, being carried in  
To her soul, had reproduced itself afresh  
In finer motions of the lips and lids.

She said, in speaking of it, 'If a flower  
Were thrown you out of heaven at in-  
tervals,

You'd soon attain to a trick of looking  
up,—

And so with her.' She counted me her  
years,

Till I felt old; and then she counted me,  
Her sorrowful pleasures, till I felt  
ashamed.

She told me she was fortunate and calm  
On such and such a season, sate and  
sewed,

With no one to break up her crystal  
thoughts,

While rimes from lovely poems span  
around

Their ringing circles of ecstatic tune,  
Beneath the moistened finger of the Hour.  
Her parents called her a strange, sickly  
child,

Not good for much, and given to sulk and  
stare,

And smile into the hedges and the clouds,  
And tremble if one shook her from her fit  
By any blow, or wordeven. Outdoor jobs  
Went ill with her, and household quiet  
work

She was not born to. Had they kept  
the north,

They might have had their pennyworth  
out of her

Like other parents, in the factories,  
(Your children work for you, not you  
for them,

Or else they better had been choked  
with air

The first breath drawn;) but, in this  
trampling life,

Was nothing to be done with such a child  
But tramp and tramp. And yet she  
knitted hose

Not ill, and was not dull at needlework;  
And all the country people gave her pence:  
For darning stockings past their natural  
age,

And patching petticoats from old to new,  
And other light work done for thrifty  
wives.

One day, said Marian,—the sun shone  
that day—

Her mother had been badly beat, and felt  
The bruises sore about her wretched soul  
(That must have been): she came in  
suddenly,

And snatching in a sort of breathless rage  
 Her daughter's headgear comb, let down  
     the hair  
 Upon her like a sudden waterfall.  
 Then drew her drenched and passive by  
     the arm  
 Outside the hut they lived in. When  
     the child  
 Could clear her blinded face from all that  
     stream  
 Of tresses . . . there, a man stood, with  
     beast's eyes  
 That seemed as they would swallow her  
     alive  
 Complete in body and spirit, hair and  
     all.—  
 And burning stertorous breath that hurt  
     her cheek,  
 He breathed so near. The mother held  
     her tight,  
 Saying hard between her teeth—'Why  
     wench, why wench,  
 The squire speaks to you now—the  
     squire's too good ;  
 He means to set you up, and comfort us.  
 Be mannerly at least.' The child turned  
     round  
 And looked up piteous in the mother's  
     face  
 (Be sure that mother's death-bed will  
     not want  
 Another devil to damn, than such a look),  
 'Oh, mother !' then, with desperate  
     glance to heaven,  
 'God, free me from my mother,' she  
     shrieked out,  
 'These mothers are too dreadful.' And,  
     with force  
 As passionate as fear, she tore her hands  
 Like lilies from the rocks, from hers and  
     his,  
 And sprang down, bounded headlong  
     down the steep,  
 Away from both—away, if possible,  
 As far as God,—away! They yelled at her,  
 As famished hounds at a hare. She  
     heard them yell ;  
 She felt her name hiss after her from the  
     hills,  
 Like shot from guns. On, on. And now  
     she had cast  
 The voices off with the uplands. On.  
     Mad fear

Was running in her feet and killing the  
     ground ;  
 The white roads curled as if she burnt  
     them up,  
 The green fields melted, wayside trees  
     fell back  
 To make room for her. Then her head  
     grew vexed ;  
 Trees, fields, turned on her and ran  
     after her ;  
 She heard the quick pants of the hills  
     behind,  
 Their keen air pricked her neck : she  
     had lost her feet,  
 Could run no more, yet somehow went  
     as fast,  
 The horizon red 'twixt steeples in the east  
 So sucked her forward, forward, while  
     her heart  
 Kept swelling, swelling, till it swelled  
     so big  
 It seemed to fill her body.—when it burst  
 And overflowed the world and swamped  
     the light ;  
 'And now I am dead and safe,' thought  
     Marian Erle—  
 She had dropped, she had fainted.  
     As the sense returned,  
 The night had passed—not life's night.  
     She was 'ware  
 Of heavy tumbling motions, creaking  
     wheels,  
 The driver shouting to the lazy team  
 That swung their rankling bells against  
     her brain,  
 While, through the wagon's coverture  
     and chinks,  
 The cruel yellow morning pecked at her  
 Alive or dead upon the straw inside,—  
 At which her soul ached back into the  
     dark  
 And prayed, 'no more of that.' A  
     wagoner  
 Had found her in a ditch beneath the  
     moon,  
 As white as moonshine save for the  
     oozing blood.  
 At first he thought her dead ; but when  
     he had wiped  
 The mouth and heard it sigh, he raised  
     her up,  
 And laid her in his wagon in the straw,  
 And so conveyed her to the distant town

To which his business called himself,  
and left  
That heap of misery at the hospital.

She stirred ;—the place seemed new and  
strange as death.

The white strait bed, with others strait  
and white,

Like graves dug side by side at measured  
lengths,

And quiet people walking in and out  
With wonderful low voices and soft steps  
And apparitional equal care for each,  
Astonished her with order, silence, law.  
And when a gentle hand held out a cup,  
She took it, as you do at sacrament,  
Halfawed, half melted,—not being used,  
indeed,

To so much love as makes the form of love  
And courtesy of manners. Delicate drinks  
And rare white bread, to which some  
dying eyes

Were turned in observation. O my God,  
How sick we must be, ere we make men  
just!

I think it frets the saints in heaven to see  
How many desolate creatures on the earth  
Have learnt the simple dues of fellowship  
And social comfort, in a hospital,  
As Marian did. She lay there, stunned,  
half tranced,

And wished, at intervals of growing  
sense,

She might be sicker yet, if sickness made  
The world so marvellous kind, the air  
so hushed,

And all her wake-time quiet as a sleep ;  
For now she understood (as such things  
were)

How sickness ended very oft in heaven  
Among the unspoken raptures :—yet  
more sick,

And surer happy. Then she dropped  
her lids,

And, folding up her hands as flowers at  
night,

Would lose no moment of the blessed  
time.

She lay and seethed in fever many weeks,  
But youth was strong and overcame the  
test ;

Revolted soul and flesh were reconciled

And fetched back to the necessary day  
And daylight duties. She could creep  
about

The long bare rooms, and stare out  
drearily

From any narrow window on the street,  
Till some one who had nursed her as  
a friend

Said coldly to her, as an enemy,  
'She had leave to go next week, being  
well enough,'

(While only her heart ached). 'Go  
next week,' thought she,

'Next week! how would it be with her  
next week,

Let out into that terrible street alone  
Among the pushing people, . . to go . .  
where?'

One day, the last before the dreaded last,  
Among the convalescents, like herself!

Prepared to go next morning, she sate  
dumb,

And heard half absently the women  
talk,—

How one was famished for her baby's  
cheeks,

'The little wretch would know her!  
a year old

And lively, like his father!'—one was  
keen

To get to work, and fill some clamorous  
mouths ;

And one wastender for her dear goodman  
Who had missed her sorely,—and one,  
querulous . .

'Would pay backbiting neighbours who  
had dared

To talk about her as already dead,'—  
And one was proud . . 'and if her

sweetheart Luke

Had left her for a ruddier face than hers  
(The gossip would be seen through at a  
glance)

Sweet riddance of such sweethearts—  
let him hang!

'Twere good to have been sick for such  
an end.'

And while they talked, and Marian felt  
the worse

For having missed the worst of all their  
wrongs,

A visitor was ushered through the wards  
And paused among the talkers. 'When  
he looked

It was as if he spoke, and when he spoke  
He sang perhaps,' said Marian; 'could  
she tell?

She only knew' (so much she had  
chronicled,

As seraphs might the making of the sun)  
'That he who came and spake, was  
Romney Leigh,

And then and there she saw and heard  
him first.'

And when it was her turn to have the  
face

Upon her, all those buzzing pallid lips  
Being satisfied with comfort—when he  
changed

To Marian, saying 'And *you?* you're  
going, where?'—

She, moveless as a worm beneath a stone  
Which some one's stumbling foot has  
spurned aside,

Writhed suddenly, astonished with the  
light,

And breaking into sobs cried, 'Where  
I go?

None asked me till this moment. Can  
I say

Where I go,—when it has not seemed  
worth while

To God Himself, who thinks of every one,  
To think of me and fix where I shall go?

'So young,' he gently asked her, 'you  
have lost

Your father and your mother?'  
'Both,' she said,

'Both lost! my father was burnt up  
with gin

Or ever I sucked milk, and so is lost.  
My mother sold me to a man last month,

And so my mother's lost, 'tis manifest.  
And I, who fled from her for miles and  
miles,

As if I had caught sight of the fire of hell  
Through some wild gap (she was my  
mother, sir),

It seems I shall be lost too, presently,  
And so we end, all three of us.'

'Poor child,'  
He said,—with such a pity in his voice,

It soothed her more than her own  
tears,—'poor child!

'Tis simple that betrayal by mother's love  
Should bring despair of God's too.

Yet be taught,  
He's better to us than many mothers are,  
And children cannot wander beyond  
reach

Of the sweep of His white raiment.  
Touch and hold!

And if you weep still, weep where John  
was laid

While Jesus loved him.'  
'She could say the words,'

She told me, 'exactly as he uttered them  
A year back, since in any doubt or dark  
They came out like the stars, and shone  
on her

With just their comfort. Common words,  
perhaps;

The ministers in church might say the  
same;

But *he*, he made the church with what  
he spoke,—

The difference was the miracle,' said she.

Then catching up hersmile to ravishment,  
She added quickly, 'I repeat his words,

But not his tones: can any one repeat  
The music of an organ, out of church?

And when he said "poor child," I shut  
my eyes

To feel how tenderly his voice broke  
through,

As the ointment-box broke on the Holy  
feet

To let out the rich medicative nard.'

She told me how he had raised and  
rescued her

With reverent pity, as, in touching grief,  
He touched the wounds of Christ,—and  
made her feel

More self-respecting. Hope, he called,  
belief

In God,—work, worship,—therefore let  
us pray!

And thus, to snatch her soul from atheism,  
And keep it stainless from her mother's  
face,

He sent her to a famous sempstress-house  
Far off in London, there to work and  
hope.

With that, they parted. She kept sight  
 of Heaven,  
 But not of Romney. He had good to do  
 To others: through the days and through  
 the nights  
 She sewed and sewed and sewed. She  
 drooped sometimes,  
 And wondered, while along the tawny  
 light  
 She struck the new thread into her  
 needle's eye,  
 How people without mothers on the hills  
 Could choose the town to live in!—then  
 she drew  
 The stitch, and mused how Romney's  
 face would look,  
 And if 'twere likely he'd remember hers  
 When they two had their meeting after  
 death.

## FOURTH BOOK

THEY met still sooner. 'Twas a year  
 from thence  
 That Lucy Gresham, the sick sempstress  
 girl,  
 Who sewed by Marian's chair so still  
 and quick,  
 And leant her head upon its back to cough  
 More freely, when, the mistress turning  
 round,  
 The others took occasion to laugh out,  
 Gave up at last. Among the workers,  
 spoke  
 A bold girl with black eyebrows and red  
 lips;  
 'You know the news! Who's dying,  
 do you think?  
 Our Lucy Gresham. I expected it  
 As little as Nell Hart's wedding. Blush  
 not, Nell,  
 Thy curls be red enough without thy  
 cheeks,  
 And, some day, there'll be found a man  
 to dote  
 On red curls.—Lucy Gresham swooned  
 last night,  
 Dropped sudden in the street while  
 going home;  
 And now the baker says, who took her up  
 And laid her by her grandmother in bed,

He'll give her a week to die in. Pass  
 the silk.  
 Let's hope he gave her a loaf too, within  
 reach,  
 For otherwise they'll starve before they  
 die,  
 That funny pair of bedfellows! Miss  
 Bell,  
 I'll thank you for the scissors. The old  
 crone  
 Is paralytic—that's the reason why  
 Our Lucy's thread went faster than her  
 breath,  
 Which went too quick, we all know.  
 Marian Erle!  
 Why, Marian Erle, you're not the fool  
 to cry!  
 Your tears spoil Lady Waldemar's new  
 dress,  
 You piece of pity!'   
 Marian rose up straight,  
 And, breaking through the talk and  
 through the work,  
 Went outward, in the face of their  
 surprise,  
 To Lucy's home, to nurse her back to life  
 Or down to death. She knew, by such  
 an act,  
 All place and grace were forfeit in the  
 house,  
 Whose mistress would supply the miss-  
 ing hand  
 With necessary, not inhuman haste,  
 And take no blame. But pity, too, had  
 dues;  
 She could not leave a solitary soul  
 To founder in the dark, while she sate  
 still  
 And lavished stitches on a lady's hem  
 As if no other work were paramount.  
 'Why, God,' thought Marian, 'has  
 a missing hand  
 This moment; Lucy wants a drink,  
 perhaps.  
 Let others miss me! never miss me, God!'  
 So Marian sate by Lucy's bed, content  
 With duty, and was strong, for recom-  
 pense,  
 To hold the lamp of human love arm-high  
 To catch the death-strained eyes and  
 comfort them,  
 Until the angels, on the luminous side

Of death, had got theirs ready. And she said.

If Lucy thanked her sometimes, called her kind,

It touched her strangely. 'Marian Erle, called kind!

What, Marian, beaten and sold, who could not die!

'Tis verily good fortune to be kind.

Ah you,' she said, 'who are born to such a grace,

Be sorry for the unlicensed class, the poor, Reduced to think the best good fortune means

That others, simply, should be kind to them.'

From sleep to sleep when Lucy had slid away

So gently, like the light upon a hill, Of which none names the moment that it goes

Though all see when 'tis gone,—a man came in

And stood beside the bed. The old idiot wretch

Screamed feebly, like a baby overlain, 'Sir, sir, you won't mistake me for the corpse?

Don't look at *me*, sir! never bury *me*! Although I lie here I'm alive as you.

Except my legs and arms,—I eat and drink And understand, — (that you're the gentleman

Who fits the funerals up, Heaven speed you, sir,)

And certainly I should be livelier still If Lucy here. . . sir, Lucy is the corpse . .

Had worked more properly to buy me wine ;

But Lucy, sir, was always slow at work, I shan't lose much by Lucy. Marian Erle,

Speak up and show the gentleman the corpse.'

And then a voice said, 'Marian Erle.' She rose ;

It was the hour for angels—there, stood hers !

She scarcely marvelled to see Romney Leigh.

As light November snows to empty nests,

As grass to graves, as moss to mildewed stones,

As July suns to ruins, through the rents, As ministering spirits to mourners, through a loss,

As Heaven itself to men, through pangs of death,

He came uncalled wherever grief had come.

'And so,' said Marian Erle, 'we met anew.'

And added softly, 'so, we shall not part.'

He was not angry that she had left the house

Wherein he placed her. Well—she had feared it might

Have vexed him. Also, when he found her set

On keeping, though the dead was out of sight,

That half-dead, half-live body left behind With cankerous heart and flesh, which took your best

And cursed you for the little good it did. (Could any leave the bed-ridden wretch alone,

So joyless she was thankless even to God,

Much more to you?) he did not say 'twas well,

Yet Marian thought he did not take it ill,— Since day by day he came, and every day She felt within his utterance and his eyes A closer, tenderer presence of the soul, Until at last he said, 'We shall not part.'

On that same day, was Marian's work complete :

She had smoothed the empty bed, and swept the floor

Of coffin sawdust, set the chairs anew The dead had ended gossip in, and stood

In that poor room so cold and orderly, The door-key in her hand, prepared to go

As *they* had, howbeit not their way. He spoke. .

'Dear Marian, of one clay God made us all,

And though men push and poke and paddle in't

(As children play at fashioning dirt-pies) And call their fancies by the name of facts,

Assuming difference, lordship, privilege,  
When all's plain dirt,—they come back  
to it at last,  
The first grave-digger proves it with  
a spade,  
And pats all even. Need we wait for this,  
You, Marian, and I, Romney?'

She, at that,  
Looked blindly in his face, as when one  
looks

Through driving autumn-rains to find  
the sky.

He went on speaking.

'Marian, I being born  
from  
Thenoble people,—though the tyrannous  
sword

Which pierced Christ's heart, has cleft  
the world in twain  
'Twixt class and class, opposing rich to  
poor,

Shall we keep parted? Not so. Let us lean  
And strain together rather, each to each,  
Compress the red lips of this gaping  
wound

As far as two souls can,—aye, lean and  
league,

I from my superabundance,—from your  
want

You,—joining in a protest gainst the  
wrong

On both sides.'

All the rest, he held her hand  
In speaking, which confused the sense  
of much.

Her heart against his words beat out so  
thick,

They might as well be written on the dust  
Where some poor bird, escaping from  
hawk's beak,

Has dropped and beats its shuddering  
wings,—the lines

Are rubbed so,—yet 'twas something  
like to this,

—'That they two, standing at the two  
extremes

Of social classes, had received one seal,  
Been dedicate and drawn beyond them-  
selves

To mercy and ministration,—he, indeed,  
Through what he knew, and she,  
through what she felt,

He, by man's conscience, she, by  
woman's heart,

Relinquishing their several 'vantage  
posts

Of wealthy ease and honourable toil,  
To work with God at love. And since  
God willed

That putting out his hand to touch this ark  
He found a woman's hand there, he'd  
accept

The sign too, hold the tender fingers fast,  
And say, "My fellow-worker, be my  
wife!"

She told the tale with simple, rustic  
turns,—

Strong leaps of meaning in her sudden  
eyes

That took the gaps of any imperfect  
phrase

Of the unschooled speaker; I have  
rather writ

The thing I understood so, than the thing  
I heard so. And I cannot render right  
Her quick gesticulation, wild yet soft.

Self-startled from the habitual mood she  
used,

Half sad, half languid,—like dumb  
creatures (now

A rustling bird, and now a wandering  
deer,

Or squirrel 'gainst the oak-gloom  
flashing up

His sidelong burnished head, in just her  
way

Of savage spontaneity), that stir  
Abruptly the green silence of the woods,

And make it stranger, hosier, more  
profound;

As Nature's general heart confessed it-  
self

Of life, and then fell backward on repose.

I kissed the lips that ended.—'So indeed  
He loves you, Marian?'

'Loves me!' She looked up  
With a child's wonder when you ask  
him first

Who made the sun—a puzzled blush,  
that grew,

Then broke off in a rapid radiant smile  
Of sure solution. 'Loves me! he loves  
all,—

And me, of course. He had not asked  
me else  
To work with him for ever and be his wife.'

Her words reproved me. This perhaps  
was love—

To have its hands too full of gifts to give,  
For putting out a hand to take a gift;  
To love so much, the perfect round of love  
Includes, in strict conclusion, being  
loved;

As Eden-dew went up and fell again,  
Enough for watering Eden. Obviously  
She had not thought about his love at all:  
The cataracts of her soul had poured  
themselves,

And risen self-crowned in rainbow:  
would she ask

Who crowned her?—it sufficed that she  
was crowned.

With women of my class 'tis otherwise:  
We haggle for the small change of our  
gold,

And so much love accord for so much love,  
Rialto-prices. Are we therefore wrong?  
If marriage be a contract, look to it then,  
Contracting parties should be equal, just,  
But if, a simple fealty on one side,  
A mere religion,—right to give, is all,  
And certain brides of Europe duly ask  
To mount the pile as Indian widows do,  
The spices of their tender youth heaped  
up,

The jewels of their gracious virtues worn,  
More gems, more glory,—to consume  
entire

For a living husband: as the man's alive,  
Not dead, the woman's duty by so much  
Advanced in England beyond Hindostan.

I sate there musing, till she touched my  
hand

With hers, as softly as a strange white bird  
She feared to startle in touching. 'You  
are kind.

But are you, peradventure, vexed at heart  
Because your cousin takes me for a wife?  
I know I am not worthy—nay, in truth,  
I'm glad on 't, since, for that, he  
chooses me.

He likes the poor things of the world  
the best;

I would not therefore, if I could, be rich.

It pleasures him to stoop for buttercups;  
I would not be a rose upon the wall  
A queen might stop at, near the palace-  
door,

To say to a courtier, "Pluck that rose  
for me,  
It's prettier than the rest." O Romney  
Leigh!

I'd rather far be trodden by his foot,  
Than lie in a great queen's bosom.'

Out of breath

She paused.

'Sweet Marian, do you disavow  
The roses with that face?'

She dropt her head  
As if the wind had caught that flower  
of her

And bent it in the garden,—then looked up  
With grave assurance. 'Well, you  
think me bold!

But so we all are, when we're praying  
God.

And if I'm bold—yet, lady, credit me,  
That, since I know myself for what I am,  
Much fitter for his handmaid than his wife,  
I'll prove the handmaid and the wife at  
once,

Serve tenderly, and love obediently,  
And be a worthier mate, perhaps, than  
some

Who are wooed in silk among their  
learned books;

While I shall set myself to read his eyes,  
Till such grow plainer to me than the  
French

To wisest ladies. Do you think I'll miss  
A letter, in the spelling of his mind?

No more than they do when they sit  
and write

Their flying words with flickering wild-  
fowl tails,

Nor ever pause to ask how many *ts*,  
Should that bey, or, i, they know't so well:  
I've seen them writing, when I brought  
a dress

And waited,—floating out their soft  
white hands

On shining paper. But they're hard  
sometimes,

For all those hands!—we've used out  
many nights,

And worn the yellow daylight into  
shreds

Which flapped and shivered down our  
aching eyes  
Till night appeared more tolerable, just  
That pretty ladies might look beautiful,  
Who said at last . . . "You're lazy in  
that house!  
You're slow in sending home the  
work,—I count  
I've waited near an hour for't."  
Pardon me,  
I do not blame them, madam, nor  
misprize;  
They are fair and gracious; aye, but not  
like you,  
Since none but you has Mister Leigh's  
own blood  
Both noble and gentle,—and, without  
it . . . well,  
They are fair, I said; so fair, it scarce  
seems strange  
That, flashing out in any looking-glass  
The wonder of their glorious brows  
and breasts,  
They're charmed so, they forget to  
look behind  
And mark how pale we've grown, we  
pitiful  
Remainders of the world. And so perhaps  
If Mister Leigh had chosen a wife from  
these,  
She might, although he's better than  
her best  
And dearly she would know it, steal  
a thought  
Which should be all his, an eye-glance  
from his face,  
To plunge into the mirror opposite  
In search of her own beauty's pearl;  
while I . . .  
Ah, dearest lady, serge will outweigh  
silk  
For winter-wear when bodies feel a-cold,  
And I'll be a true wife to your cousin  
Leigh.'

Before I answered he was there himself.  
I think he had been standing in the room  
And listened probably to half her talk,  
Arrested, turned to stone,—as white  
as stone.  
Will tender sayings make men look so  
white?  
He loves her then profoundly.

'You are here,  
Aurora? Here I meet you!'—We  
clasped hands.

'Even so, dear Romney. Lady Waldemar  
Has sent me in haste to find a cousin of  
mine  
Who shall be.'

'Lady Waldemar is good.'

'Here's one, at least, who is good.'  
I sighed, and touched  
Poor Marian's happy head, as doglike she,  
Most passionately patient, waited on,  
A-tremble for her turn of greeting words;  
'I've sate a full hour with your Marian  
Erle,  
And learnt the thing by heart,—and  
from my heart  
Am therefore competent to give you  
thanks  
For such a cousin.'

'You accept at last  
A gift from me, Aurora, without scorn?  
At last I please you?'—How his voice  
was changed.

'You cannot please a woman against  
her will,  
And once you vexed me. Shall we  
speak of that?  
We'll say, then, you were noble in it all  
And I not ignorant—let it pass. And now  
You please me, Romney, when you  
please yourself;  
So, please you, be fanatical in love,  
And I'm well pleased. Ah, cousin!  
at the old hall,  
Among the gallery portraits of our Leighs,  
We shall not find a sweeter signory  
Than this pure forehead's.'

Not a word he said.  
How arrogant men are!—Even philan-  
thropists,  
Who try to take a wife up in the way  
They put down a subscription-cheque,—  
if once  
She turns and says, 'I will not tax you so,  
Most charitable sir,'—feel ill at ease  
As though she had wronged them some-  
how. I suppose  
We women should remember what we  
are,

And not throw back an obolus inscribed  
With Caesar's image, lightly. I resumed.

'It strikes me, some of those sublime  
Vandykes

Were not too proud to make good saints  
in heaven ;

And if so, then they're not too proud  
to-day,

To bow down (now the ruffs are off  
their necks)

And own this good, true, noble Marian,  
yours,

And mine, I'll say!—For poets (bear  
the word),

Half-poets even, are still whole demo-  
crats,—

Oh, not that we're disloyal to the high,  
But loyal to the low, and cognizant  
Of the less scrutable majesties. For me,  
I comprehend your choice, I justify  
Your right in choosing.'

'No, no, no,' he sighed,  
With a sort of melancholy impatient  
scorn,

As some grown man who never had  
a child

Puts by some child who plays at being  
a man,

'You did not, do not, cannot comprehend  
My choice, my ends, my motives, nor  
myself:

No matter now ; we'll let it pass, you  
say.

I thank you for your generous cousinship  
Which helps this present ; I accept for her  
Your favourable thoughts. We're fallen  
on days,

We two who are not poets, when to wed  
Requires less mutual love than common  
love

For two together to bear out at once  
Upon the loveless many. Work in pairs,  
In galley-couplings or in marriage-rings,  
The difference lies in the honour, not  
the work,—

And such we're bound to, I and she.  
But love

(You poets are benighted in this age,  
The hour's too late for catching even  
moths,

You've gnats instead), love!—love's  
fool-paradise

Is out of date, like Adam's. Set a swan  
To swim the Trenton, rather than true  
love

To float its fabulous plumage safely down  
The cataracts of this loud transition-  
time,—

Whose roar for ever henceforth in my  
ears

Must keep me deaf to music.'

There, I turned  
And kissed poor Marian, out of dis-  
content.

The man had baffled, chafed me, till  
I flung

For refuge to the woman,—as, sometimes,  
Impatient of some crowded room's close  
smell,

You throw a window open and lean out  
To breathe a long breath in the dewy night  
And cool your angry forehead. She,  
at least,

Was not built up as walls are, brick by  
brick,

Each fancy squared, each feeling ranged  
by line,

The very heat of burning youth applied  
To indurate form and system! excellent  
bricks,

A well-built wall,—which stops you on  
the road,

And, into which, you cannot see an inch  
Although you beat your head against  
it—pshaw!

'Adieu,' I said, 'for this time, cousins  
both,

And, cousin Romney, pardon me the  
word,

Be happy!—oh, in some esoteric sense  
Of course!—I mean no harm in wishing  
well.

Adieu, my Marian :—may she come to me,  
Dear Romney, and be married from my  
house!

It is not part of your philosophy  
To keep your bird upon the blackthorn?"

'Aye,'  
He answered, 'but it is. I take my wife  
Directly from the people,—and she  
comes,

As Austria's daughter to imperial France,  
Betwixt her eagles, blinking not her race,

From Margaret's Court at garret-height,  
to meet

And wed me at St. James's, nor put off  
Her gown of serge for that. The things  
we do.

We do: we'll wear no mask, as if we  
blushed.'

'Dear Romney, you're the poet,'  
I replied.

But felt my smile too mournful for my  
word.

And turned and went. Aye, masks,  
I thought,—beware

Of tragic masks we tie before the glass,  
Uplifted on the cothurn half a yard  
Above the natural stature! we would play  
Heroic parts to ourselves,—and end,  
perhaps,

As impotently as Athenian wives  
Who shrieked in fits at the Eumenides.

His foot pursued me down the stair.  
'At least

You'll suffer me to walk with you beyond  
These hideous streets, these graves,  
where men alive

Packed close with earthworms, burr  
unconsciously

About the plague that slew them; let  
me go.

The very women pelt their souls in mud  
At any woman who walks here alone.  
How came you here alone?—you are  
ignorant.'

We had a strange and melancholy walk:  
The night came drizzling downward in  
dark rain,

And, as we walked, the colour of the  
time,

The act, the presence, my hand upon  
his arm,

His voice in my ear, and mine to my  
own sense,

Appeared unnatural. We talked modern  
books

And daily papers, Spanish marriage-  
schemes

And English climate—was't so cold  
last year?

And will the wind change by to-morrow  
morn?

Can Guizot stand? is London full?  
is trade

Competitive? has Dickens turned his  
hinge

A-pinch upon the fingers of the great?  
And are potatoes to grow mythical

Like moly? will the apple die out too?  
Which way is the wind to-night? south-  
east? due east?

We talked on fast, while every common  
word

Seemed tangled with the thunder at one  
end,

And ready to pull down upon our heads  
A terror out of sight. And yet to pause

Were surelier mortal: we tore greedily  
up

All silence, all the innocent breathing-  
points,

As if, like pale conspirators in haste,  
We tore up papers where our signatures

Imperilled us to an ugly shame or death.

I cannot tell you why it was. 'Tis plain  
We had not loved nor hated: wherefore  
dread

To spill gunpowder on ground safe from  
fire?

Perhaps we had lived too closely, to  
diverge

So absolutely: leave two clocks, they  
say,

Wound up to different hours, upon one  
shelf,

And slowly, through the interior wheels  
of each,

The blind mechanic motion sets itself  
A-throb to feel out for the mutual time.

It was not so with us, indeed: while he  
Struck midnight, I kept striking six at  
dawn,

While he marked judgement, I, redemp-  
tion-day;

And such exception to a general law  
Imperious upon inert matter even,

Might make us, each to either, insecure,  
A beckoning mystery or a troubling fear.

I mind me, when we parted at the door,  
How strange his good-night sounded,—  
like good-night

Beside a deathbed, where the morrow's  
sun

Is sure to come too late for more good-days :

And all that night I thought . . . "Good-night," said he.

And so, a month passed. Let me set it down

At once,—I have been wrong, I have been wrong.

We are wrong always when we think too much

Of what we think or are: albeit our thoughts

Be verily bitter as self-sacrifice,  
We're no less selfish. If we sleep on rocks

Or roses, sleeping past the hour of noon  
We're lazy. This I write against myself.

I had done a duty in the visit paid  
To Marian, and was ready otherwise

To give the witness of my presence and name

Whenever she should marry.—Which, I thought,

Sufficed. I even had cast into the scale  
An overweight of justice toward the match;

The Lady Waldemar had missed her tool,  
Had broken it in the lock as being too straight

For a crooked purpose, while poor Marian Erle

Missed nothing in my accents or my acts:

I had not been ungenerous on the whole,  
Nor yet untender; so, enough. I felt

Tired, overworked: this marriage somewhat jarred;

Or, if it did not, all the bridal noise,  
The pricking of the map of life with pins,

In schemes of . . . 'Here we'll go,' and  
'There we'll stay,'

And 'Everywhere we'll prosper in our love,'

Was scarce my business: let them order it;

Who else should care? I threw myself aside,

As one who had done her work and shuts her eyes

To rest the better.

I, who should have known,

Forereckoned mischief! Where we disavow

Being keeper to our brother we're his Cain.

I might have held that poor child to my heart

A little longer! 'twould have hurt me much

To have hastened by its beats the marriage day,

And kept her safe meantime from tampering hands

Or, peradventure, traps. What drew me back

From telling Romney plainly the designs  
Of Lady Waldemar, as spoken out

To me. . . me? had I any right, aye, right,  
With womanly compassion and reserve

To break the fall of woman's impudence!—

To stand by calmly, knowing what I knew,

And hear him call her *good*?  
Distrust that word.

'There is none good save God,' said Jesus Christ.

If He once, in the first creation-week,  
Called creatures good,—for ever, afterward,

The Devil only has done it, and his heirs,  
The knaves who win so, and the fools who lose;

The word's grown dangerous. In the middle age,

I think they called malignant fays and imps

Good people. A good neighbour, even in this,

Is fatal sometimes,—cuts your morning up  
To mince-meat of the very smallest talk,

Then helps to sugar her bohea at night  
With your reputation. I have known

good wives,  
As chaste, or nearly so, as Potiphar's;

And good, good mothers, who would use a child

To better an intrigue; good friends, beside

(Very good), who hung succinctly round your neck

And sucked your breath, as cats are fabled to do

By sleeping infants. And we all have  
known

Good critics who have stamped out  
poet's hopes,

Good statesmen who pulled ruin on the  
state,

Good patriots who for a theory risked  
a cause,

Good kings who disembowelled for a  
tax,

Good popes who brought all good to  
jeopardy,

Good Christians who sate still in easy  
chairs

And damned the general world for  
standing up.—

Now may the good God pardon all  
good men!

How bitterly I speak,—how certainly  
The innocent white milk in us is turned,  
By much persistent shining of the sun!—  
Shake up the sweetest in us long enough  
With men, it drops to foolish curd, too sour  
To feed the most untender of Christ's  
lambs.

I should have thought,—a woman of the  
world

Like her I'm meaning, centre to herself,  
Who has wheeled on her own pivot half  
a life

In isolated self-love and self-will,  
As a windmill seen at distance radiating  
Its delicate white vans against the sky,  
So soft and soundless, simply beautiful,  
Seen nearer,—what a roar and tear it  
makes,

How it grinds and bruises!—if she loves  
at last,

Her love's a readjustment of self-love,  
No more,—a need felt of another's use  
To her one advantage, as the mill wants  
grain,

The fire wants fuel, the very wolf wants  
prey,

And none of these is more unscrupulous  
Than such a charming woman when she  
loves.

She'll not be thwarted by an obstacle  
So trifling as . . her soul is, . . much less  
yours!—

Is God a consideration?—she loves you,

Not God; she will not flinch for Him  
indeed:

She did not for the Marchioness of Perth,  
When wanting tickets for the fancy ball.  
She loves you, sir, with passion, to lunacy,  
She loves you like her diamonds . .  
almost.

Well,

A month passed so, and then the notice  
came,

On such a day the marriage at the church.  
I was not backward.

Half Saint Giles in frieze

Was bidden to meet Saint James in  
cloth of gold,

And, after contract at the altar, pass  
To eat a marriage-feast on Hampstead  
Heath.

Of course the people came in un-  
compelled,

Lame, blind, and worse—sick, sorrowful,  
and worse,

The humours of the peccant social wound  
All pressed out, poured down upon

Pimlico,

Exasperating the unaccustomed air  
With a hideous interfusion. You'd

suppose

A finished generation, dead of plague,  
Swept outward from their graves into the

sun,

The moil of death upon them. What a  
sight!

A holiday of miserable men

Is sadder than a burial-day of kings.

They clogged the streets, they oozed  
into the church

In a dark slow stream, like blood. To  
see that sight,

The noble ladies stood up in their pews,  
Some pale for fear, a few as red for hate,

Some simply curious, some just insolent,  
And some in wondering scorn,—'What

next? what next?'

These crushed their delicate rose-lips  
from the smile

That misbecame them in a holy place,  
With brodered hems of perfumed hand-

kerchiefs;

Those passed the salts, with confidence  
of eyes

And simultaneous shiver of moiré silk:

While all the aisles, alive and black with  
heads,  
Crawled slowly toward the altar from  
the street,  
As bruised snakes crawl and hiss out of  
a hole  
With shuddering involution, swaying  
slow  
From right to left, and then from left to  
right,  
In pants and pauses. What an ugly crest  
Of faces rose upon you everywhere  
From that crammed mass! you did not  
usually  
See faces like them in the open day:  
They hide in cellars, not to make you mad  
As Romney Leigh is.—Faces!—O my  
God,  
We call those, faces! men's and women's  
. . . aye,  
And children's;—babies, hanging like a  
rag  
Forgotten on their mother's neck,—poor  
mouths,  
Wiped clean of mother's milk by mother's  
blow  
Before they are taught her cursing.  
Faces? . . . phew,  
We'll call them vices, festering to  
despairs,  
Or sorrows, petrifying to vices: not  
A finger-touch of God left whole on them,  
All ruined, lost—the countenance worn  
out  
As the garment, the will dissolute as the  
act,  
The passions loose and dragging in the  
dirt  
To trip a foot up at the first free step!  
Those, faces? 'twas as if you had stirred  
up hell  
To heave its lowest dreg-fiends upper-  
most  
In fiery swirls of slime,—such strangled  
fronts,  
Such obdurate jaws were thrown up  
constantly  
To twit you with your race, corrupt  
your blood,  
And grind to devilish colours all your  
dreams  
Henceforth,—though, haply, you should  
drop asleep

By clink of silver waters, in a muse  
On Raffael's mild Madonna of the Bird.

I've waked and slept through many  
nights and days  
Since then,—but still that day will catch  
my breath  
Like a nightmare. There are fatal days,  
indeed,  
In which the fibrous years have taken root  
So deeply, that they quiver to their tops  
Whene'er you stir the dust of such a day.

My cousin met me with his eyes and hand,  
And then, with just a word, . . . that  
'Marian Erle  
Was coming with her bridesmaids  
presently,'  
Made haste to place me by the altar-stair  
Where he and other noble gentlemen  
And high-born ladies, waited for the  
bride.

We waited. It was early: there was time  
For greeting and the morning's com-  
pliment,  
And gradually a ripple of women's talk  
Arose and fell and tossed about a spray  
Of English ss, soft as a silent hush,  
And, notwithstanding, quite as audible  
As louder phrases thrown out by the men.  
—'Yes, really, if we need to wait in church  
We need to talk there.'—'She? 'tis  
Lady Ayr,

In blue—not purple! that's the dowager.'  
—'She looks as young'—'She flirts as  
young, you mean.

Why if you had seen her upon Thursday  
night,

You'd call Miss Norris modest.'—'You  
again!

I waltzed with you three hours back.  
Up at six,

Up still at ten; scarce time to change  
one's shoes:

I feel as white and sulky as a ghost,  
So pray don't speak to me; Lord  
Belcher.'—'No.

I'll look at you instead, and it's enough  
While you have that face.' 'In church,  
my lord! fie, fie!'

—'Adair, you stayed for the Division?  
—'Lost

By one.' 'The devil it is! I'm sorry for't.  
And if I had not promised Mistress  
Grove'...

'You might have kept your word to  
Liverpool.'

—'Constituents must remember, after all,  
We're mortal.'—'We remind them of  
it.'—'Hark,

The bride comes! here she comes, in a  
stream of milk!'

—'There! Dear, you are asleep still;  
don't you know

The five Miss Granvilles! always dressed  
in white

To show they're ready to be married.'  
—'Lower!

The aunt is at your elbow.'—'Lady Maud,  
Did Lady Waldemar tell you she had seen  
This girl of Leigh's?' 'No,—wait!

'twas Mistress Brookes,  
Who told me Lady Waldemar told her—

No, 'twasn't Mistress Brookes.'—'She's  
pretty?'—'Who?

Mistress Brookes? Lady Waldemar?'  
—'How hot!

Pray is't the law to-day we're not to  
breathe?

You're treading on my shawl—I thank  
you, sir.'

—'They' say the bride's a mere child,  
who can't read,

But knows the things she shouldn't,  
with wide-awake

Great eyes. I'd go through fire to look  
at her.'

—'You do, I think.'—'And Lady  
Waldemar

(You see her; sitting close to Romney  
Leigh.

How beautiful she looks, a little flushed!)  
Has taken up the girl, and methodized

Leigh's folly. Should I have come here,  
you suppose,

Except she'd asked me?'—'She'd have  
served him more

By marrying him herself.'  
'Ah—there she comes,

The bride, at last!'  
'Indeed, no. Past eleven.

She puts off her patched petticoat to-day  
And puts on May-fair manners, so begins

By setting us to wait.'—'Yes, yes, this  
Leigh

Was always odd; it's in the blood, I think;  
His father's uncle's cousin's second son  
Was, was... you understand me; and  
for him,

He's stark,—has turned quite lunatic upon  
This modern question of the poor—the  
poor.

An excellent subject when you're  
moderate;

You've seen Prince Albert's model  
lodging-house?

Does honour to his Royal Highness.  
Good!

But would he stop his carriage in Cheap-  
side

To shake a common fellow by the fist  
Whose name was... Shakespeare? no.

We draw a line,  
And if we stand not by our order, we

In England, we fall headlong. Here's a  
sight,—

A hideous sight, a most indecent sight!  
My wife would come, sir, or I had kept

her back.  
By heaven, sir, when poor Damiens'

trunk and limbs  
Were torn by horses, women of the court

Stood by and stared, exactly as to-day  
On this dismembering of society,

With pretty, troubled faces.'  
'Now, at last.

She comes now.'  
'Where? who sees? you

push me, sir,  
Beyond the point of what is mannerly.

You're standing, madam, on my second  
flounce.

I do beseech you...'  
'No—it's not the bride.

Half-past eleven. How late. The bride-  
groom, mark,

Gets anxious and goes out.'  
'And as I said.

These Leighs! our best blood running  
in the rut!

It's something awful. We had pardoned  
him.

A simple misalliance got up aside  
For a pair of sky-blue eyes; the House

of Lords  
Has winked at such things, and we've

all been young.  
But here's an intermarriage reasoned out,

A contract (carried boldly to the light  
To challenge observation, pioneer  
Good acts by a great example) 'twixt  
the extremes

Of martyriized society,—on the left  
The well-born, on the right the merest  
mob,

To treat as equals !—'tis anarchical ;  
It means more than it says ; 'tis damnable.  
Why, sir, we can't have even our coffee  
good,

Unless we strain it.'

'Here, Miss Leigh !'

'Lord Howe,

You're Romney's friend. What's all  
this waiting for ?'

'I cannot tell. The bride has lost her head  
(And way, perhaps !) to prove her  
sympathy

With the bridegroom.'

'What,—you also, disapprove !'

'Oh, I approve of nothing in the world,'  
He answered, 'not of you, still less of  
me,

Nor even of Romney, though he's worth  
us both.

We're all gone wrong. The tune in us  
is lost ;

And whistling down back alleys to the  
moon

Will never catch it.'

Let me draw Lord Howe.

A born aristocrat, bred radical,  
And educated socialist, who still  
Goes floating, on traditions of his kind,  
Across the theoretic flood from France,  
Though, like a drenched Noah on a  
rotten deck,

Scarce safer for his place there. He,  
at least,

Will never land on Ararat, he knows,  
To recommence the world on the new  
plan :

Indeed, he thinks, said world had better  
end,

He sympathizes rather with the fish  
Outside, than with the drowned paired  
beasts within

Who cannot couple again or multiply,—  
And that's the sort of Noah he is,  
Lord Howe.

He never could be anything complete,  
Except a loyal, upright gentleman,  
A liberal landlord, graceful diner-out,  
And entertainer more than hospitable,  
Whom authors dine with and forget the  
hock.

Whatever he believes, and it is much,  
But nowise certain, now here and now  
there,

He still has sympathies beyond his creed  
Diverting him from action. In the House,  
No party counts upon him, while for all  
His speeches have a noticeable weight.  
Men like his books too (he has written  
books),

Which, safe to lie beside a bishop's chair,  
At times outreach themselves with jets  
of fire

At which the foremost of the progressists  
May warm audacious hands in passing by.  
Of stature over-tall, lounging for ease ;  
Light hair, that seems to carry a wind  
in it,

And eyes that, when they look on you,  
will lean

Their whole weight, half in indolence  
and half

In wishing you unmitigated good,  
Until you know not if to flinch from him  
Or thank him.—'Tis Lord Howe.

'We're all gone wrong,'  
Said he, 'and Romney, that dear friend  
of ours,

Is nowise right. There's one true  
thing on earth,

That's love ! he takes it up, and dresses it,  
And acts a play with it, as Hamlet did,  
To show what cruel uncles we have been,  
And how we should be uneasy in our  
minds

While he, Prince Hamlet, weds a pretty  
maid

(Who keeps us too long waiting, we'll  
confess)

By symbol, to instruct us formally  
To fill the ditches up 'twixt class and class,  
And live together in phalansteries.

What then ?—he's mad, our Hamlet !  
clap his play,

And bind him.'

'Ah, Lord Howe, this spectacle  
Pulls stronger at us than the Dane's.  
See there !

The crammed aisles heave and strain  
and steam with life.

Dear Heaven, what life!

'Why, yes,—a poet sees;  
Which makes him different from a  
common man.

I, too, see somewhat, though I cannot  
sing;

I should have been a poet, only that  
My mother took fright at the ugly world,  
And bore me tongue-tied. If you'll  
grant me now

That Romney gives us a fine actor-piece  
To make us merry on his marriage-morn,  
The fable's worse than Hamlet's I'll  
concede.

The terrible people, old and poor and  
blind,

Their eyes eat out with plague and  
poverty

From seeing beautiful and cheerful  
sights,

We'll liken to a brutalized King Lear,  
Led out,—by no means to clear scores  
with wrongs—

His wrongs are so far back, he has forgot  
(All's past like youth); but just to  
witness here

A simple contract,—he, upon his side,  
And Regan with her sister Goneril

And all the dappled courtiers and  
court-fools

On their side. Not that any of these  
would say

They're sorry, neither. What is done,  
is done,

And violence is now turned privilege,  
As cream turns cheese, if buried long  
enough.

What could such lovely ladies have to do  
With the old man there, in those ill-  
odorous rags,

Except to keep the wind-side of him?  
Lear

Is flat and quiet, as a decent grave;  
He does not curse his daughters in the  
least:

Be these his daughters? Lear is thinking of  
His porridge chiefly . . . is it getting cold  
At Hampstead? will the ale be served  
in pots?

Poor Lear, poor daughters! Bravo,  
Romney's play.'

A murmur and a movement drew around,  
A naked whisper touched us. Some-  
thing wrong.

What's wrong? The black crowd, as  
an overstrained

Cord, quivered in vibration, and I saw . .  
Was that *his* face I saw? . . his . .

Romney Leigh's . .  
Which tossed a sudden horror like  
a sponge

Into all eyes,—while himself stood  
white upon

The topmost altar-stair and tried to speak,  
And failed, and lifted higher above his  
head

A letter, . . as a man who drowns and  
gasps.

'My brothers, bear with me! I am very  
weak.

I meant but only good. Perhaps I meant  
Too proudly, and God snatched the  
circumstance

And changed it therefore. There's no  
marriage—none.

She leaves me,—she departs,—she  
disappears,

I lose her. Yet I never forced her "aye,"  
To have her "no" so cast into my teeth  
In manner of an accusation, thus.

My friends, you are dismissed. Go,  
eat and drink

According to the programme,—and  
farewell!'

He ended. There was silence in the  
church.

We heard a baby sucking in its sleep  
At the farthest end of the aisle. Then  
spoke a man,

'Now, look to it, coves, that all the  
beef and drink

Be not filched from us like the other fun,  
For beer's spilt easier than a woman's  
lost!

This gentry is not honest with the poor;  
They bring us up, to trick us.'—'Go it,  
Jim,'

A woman screamed back,—'I'm a tender  
soul,

I never banged a child at two years old  
And drew blood from him, but I sobbed  
for it

Next moment,—and I've had a plague  
of seven.

I'm tender; I've no stomach even for beef,  
Until I know about the girl that's lost,  
That's killed, mayhap. I did misdoubt,  
at first,

The fine lord meant no good by her or us.  
He, maybe, got the upper hand of her  
By holding up a wedding-ring, and then. . .  
A choking finger on her throat last night,  
And just a clever tale to keep us still,  
As she is, poor lost innocent. "Disap-  
pear!"

Who ever disappears except a ghost?  
And who believes a story of a ghost?  
I ask you,—would a girl go off, instead  
Of staying to be married? a fine tale!  
A wicked man, I say, a wicked man!  
For my part I would rather starve on gin  
Than make my dinner on his beef and  
beer.'—

At which a cry rose up—'We'll have  
our rights.

We'll have the girl, the girl! Your  
ladies there  
Are married safely and smoothly every  
day,

And *she* shall not drop through into a trap  
Because she's poor and of the people:  
shame!

We'll have no tricks played off by  
gentlefolks;

We'll see her righted.'

Through the rage and roar  
I heard the broken words which Romney  
flung

Among the turbulent masses, from the  
ground

He held still with his masterful pale  
face,—

As huntsmen throw the ration to the pack,  
Who, falling on it headlong, dog on dog  
In heaps of fury, rend it, swallow it up  
With yelling hound-jaws,—his indignant  
words,

His suppliant words, his most pathetic  
words,

Whereof I caught the meaning here and  
there

By his gesture . . . torn in morsels, yelled  
across,

And so devoured. From end to end,  
the church

Rocked round us like the sea in storm.  
and then

Broke up like the earth in earthquake.  
Men cried out

'Police'—and women stood and shrieked  
for God,

Or dropt and swooned; or, like a herd  
of deer

(For whom the black woods suddenly  
grow alive,

Unleashing their wild shadows down  
the wind

To hunt the creatures into corners. back  
And forward), madly fled, or blindly fell.  
Trod screeching underneath the feet of  
those

Who fled and screeched.

The last sight left to me  
Was Romney's terrible calm face above  
The tumult!—the last sound was 'Pull  
him down!

Strike—kill him!' Stretching my un-  
reasoning arms,

As men in dreams, who vainly interpose  
'Twixt gods and their undoing, with  
a cry

I struggled to precipitate myself  
Head-foremost to the rescue of my soul  
In that white face, . . . till some one  
caught me back,

And so the world went out,—I felt no  
more.

What followed was told after by Lord  
Howe,

Who bore me senseless from the  
strangling crowd

In church and street, and then returned  
alone

To see the tumult quelled. The men of  
law

Had fallen as thunder on a roaring fire,  
And made all silent,—while the people's  
smoke

Passed eddying slowly from the emptied  
aisles.

Here's Marian's letter, which a ragged  
child

Brought running, just as Romney at the  
porch

Looked out expectant of the bride. He  
sent

The letter to me by his friend Lord Howe  
Some two hours after, folded in a sheet  
On which his well-known hand had  
left a word.

Here's Marian's letter.

'Noble friend, dear saint,  
Be patient with me. Never think me vile,  
Who might to-morrow morning be your  
wife

But that I loved you more than such  
a name.

Farewell, my Romney. Let me write  
it once,—

My Romney.

'Tis so pretty a coupled word,  
I have no heart to pluck it with a blot.

We say "my God" sometimes, upon our  
knees,

Who is not therefore vexed: so bear  
with it..

And me. I know I'm foolish, weak,  
and vain;

Yet most of all I'm angry with myself  
For losing your last footstep on the stair  
That last time of your coming,—  
yesterday!

The very first time I lost step of yours  
(Its sweetness comes the next to what  
you speak),

But yesterday sobs took me by the throat  
And cut me off from music.

'Mister Leigh,  
You'll set me down as wrong in many  
things.

You've praised me, sir, for truth,—and  
now you'll learn

I had not courage to be rightly true.  
I once began to tell you how she came,  
The woman . . and you stared upon the  
floor

In one of your fixed thoughts . . which  
put me out

For that day. After, some one spoke  
of me,

So wisely, and of you, so tenderly,  
Persuading me to silence for your sake...  
Well, well! it seems this moment I was  
wrong

In keeping back from telling you the truth;  
There might be truth betwixt us two, at  
least,

If nothing else. And yet 'twas dangerous.  
Suppose a real angel came from heaven

To live with men and women! he'd go  
mad,

If no considerate hand should tie a blind  
Across his piercing eyes. 'Tis thus  
with you:

You see us too much in your heavenly  
light;

I always thought so, angel,—and indeed  
There's danger that you beat yourself  
to death

Against the edges of this alien world,  
In some divine and fluttering pity.

'Yes,  
It would be dreadful for a friend of yours,  
To see all England thrust you out of doors  
And mock you from the windows.

You might say,  
Or think (that's worse), "There's some  
one in the house

I miss and love still." Dreadful!

'Very kind,  
I pray you mark, was Lady Waldemar.  
She came to see me nine times, rather  
ten—

So beautiful, she hurts one like the day  
Let suddenly on sick eyes.

'Most kind of all,  
Your cousin!—ah, most like you! Ere  
you came

She kissed me mouth to mouth: I felt  
her soul

Dip through her serious lips in holy fire.  
God help me, but it made me arrogant;  
I almost told her that you would not lose  
By taking me to wife: though ever since  
I've pondered much a certain thing she  
asked..

"He loves you, Marian?" . . in a sort of  
mild

Derisive sadness . . as a mother asks  
Her babe, "You'll touch that star, you  
think?"

'Farewell!  
I know I never touched it.

'This is worst:  
Babes grow and lose the hope of things  
above;

A silver threepence sets them leaping  
high—

But no more stars! mark that.

'I've writ all night  
Yet told you nothing. God, if I could die,  
And let this letter break off innocent

Just here! But no—for your sake . . .  
 'Here 's the last :  
 I never could be happy as your wife,  
 I never could be harmless as your friend,  
 I never will look more into your face  
 Till God says, "Look!" I charge you,  
 seek me not,  
 Nor vex yourself with lamentable  
 thoughts  
 That peradventure I have come to grief;  
 Be sure I'm well, I'm merry, I'm at ease,  
 But such a long way, long way, long  
 way off,  
 I think you'll find me sooner in my grave,  
 And that's my choice, observe. For  
 what remains,  
 An over-generous friend will care for me  
 And keep me happy . . . happier . . .  
 'There's a blot!  
 This ink runs thick . . . we light girls  
 lightly weep . . .  
 And keep me happier . . . was the thing  
 to say,  
 Than as your wife I could be.—O, mystar,  
 My saint, my soul! for surely you're  
 my soul,  
 Through whom God touched me! I am  
 not so lost  
 I cannot thank you for the good you did,  
 The tears you stopped, which fell down  
 bitterly,  
 Like these—the times you made me  
 weep for joy  
 At hoping I should learn to write your  
 notes  
 And save the tiring of your eyes, at night;  
 And most for that sweet thrice you  
 kissed my lips  
 Saying, "Dear Marian."  
 'Twould be hard to read,  
 This letter, for a reader half as learn'd;  
 But you'll be sure to master it in spite  
 Of ups and downs. My hand shakes,  
 I am blind;  
 I'm poor at writing at the best,—and yet  
 I tried to make my *gs* the way you  
 showed.  
 Farewell. Christ love you.—Say "poor  
 Marian" now.'  
 Poor Marian!—wanton Marian!—was it  
 so,  
 Or so! For days, her touching, foolish lines

We mused on with conjectural fantasy,  
 As if some riddle of a summer-cloud  
 On which one tries unlike similitudes  
 Of now a spotted Hydra-skin cast off,  
 And now a screen of carven ivory  
 That shuts the heavens' conventual  
 secrets up  
 From mortals over-bold. We sought  
 the sense:  
 She loved him so perhaps (such words  
 mean love),  
 That, worked on by some shrewd per-  
 fidious tongue  
 (And then I thought of Lady Waldemar),  
 She left him, not to hurt him; or perhaps  
 She loved one in her class,—or did not  
 love,  
 But mused upon her wild bad tramping life  
 Until the free blood fluttered at her heart,  
 And black bread eaten by the roadside  
 hedge  
 Seemed sweeter than being put to  
 Romney's school  
 Of philanthropical self-sacrifice  
 Irrevocably.—Girls are girls, beside,  
 Thought I, and like a wedding by one rule.  
 You seldom catch these birds except  
 with chaff:  
 They feel it almost an immoral thing  
 To go out and be married in broad day,  
 Unless some winning special flattery  
 should  
 Excuse them to themselves for 't, . .  
 'No one parts  
 Her hair with such a silver line as you,  
 One moonbeam from the forehead to the  
 crown!  
 Or else, 'You bite your lip in such a way,  
 It spoils me for the smiling of the rest,'  
 And so on. Then a worthless gaud or two  
 To keep for love,—a ribbon for the neck,  
 Or some glass pin,—they have their  
 weight with girls.  
 And Romney sought her many days  
 and weeks:  
 He sifted all the refuse of the town,  
 Explored the trains, inquired among the  
 ships,  
 And felt the country through from end  
 to end;  
 No Marian!—Though I hinted what I  
 knew,—

A friend of his had reasons of her own  
For throwing back the match—he would  
not hear :

The lady had been ailing ever since,  
The shock had harmed her. Something  
in his tone

Repressed me ; something in me shamed  
my doubt

To a sigh repressed too. He went on  
to say

That, putting questions where his Marian  
lodged,

He found she had received for visitors,  
Besides himself and Lady Waldemar  
And, that once, me—a dubious woman  
dressed

Beyond us both: the rings upon her  
hands

Had dazed the children when she threw  
them pence ;

‘She wore her bonnet as the queen  
might hers,

To show the crown,’ they said,—‘a  
scarlet crown

Of roses that had never been in bud.’

When Romney told me that,—for now  
and then

He came to tell me how the search  
advanced,

His voice dropped : I bent forward for  
the rest :

The woman had been with her, it  
appeared,

At first from week to week, then day  
by day,

And last, ’twas sure . .

I looked upon the ground  
To escape the anguish of his eyes, and  
asked

As low as when you speak to mourners  
new

Of those they cannot bear yet to call dead,  
‘If Marian had as much as named to him  
A certain Rose, an early friend of hers,  
A ruined creature.’

‘Never.’—Starting up  
He strode from side to side about the  
room,

Most like some prisoned lion sprung  
awake,

Who has felt the desert sting him  
through his dreams.

‘What was I to her, that she should tell  
me aught?’

A friend! was I a friend? I see all clear.  
Such devils would pull angels out of  
heaven,

Provided they could reach them ; ’tis  
their pride ;

And that’s the odds ’twixt soul and  
body-plague!

The veriest slave who drops in Cairo’s  
street,

Cries, “Stand off from me,” to the  
passengers ;

While these blotched souls are eager to  
infect,

And blow their bad breath in a sister’s  
face

As if they got some ease by it.’

I broke through.

‘Some natures catch no plagues. I’ve  
read of babes

Found whole and sleeping by the spotted  
breast

Of one a full day dead. I hold it true.  
As I’m a woman and know womanhood,

That Marian Erle, however lured from  
place,

Deceived in way, keeps pure in aim and  
heart

As snow that’s drifted from the garden-  
bank

To the open road.’

’Twas hard to hear him laugh.  
‘The figure’s happy. Well—a dozen  
carts

And trampers will secure you presently  
A fine white snow-drift. Leave it there,

your snow!

’Twill pass for soot ere sunset. Pure  
in aim?

She’s pure in aim, I grant you,—like  
myself,

Who thought to take the world upon  
my back

To carry it o’er a chasm of social ill,  
And end by letting slip through impotence

A single soul, a child’s weight in a soul,  
Straight down the pit of hell! yes, I and  
she

Have reason to be proud of our pure aims.’  
Then softly, as the last repenting drops

Of a thunder-shower, he added, ‘The  
poor child,

Poor Marian! 'twas a luckless day for her,  
When first she chanced on my philanthropy.'

He drew a chair beside me, and sate  
down;

And I, instinctively, as women use  
Before a sweet friend's grief,—when,  
in his ear,

They hum the tune of comfort though  
themselves

Most ignorant of the special words of  
such,

And quiet so and fortify his brain

And give it time and strength for feeling  
out

To reach the availing sense beyond that  
sound,—

Went murmuring to him what, if written  
here,

Would seem not much, yet fetched him  
better help

Than peradventure if it had been more.

I've known the pregnant thinkers of our  
time,

And stood by breathless, hanging on  
their lips,

When some chromatic sequence of fine  
thought

In learned modulation phrased itself  
To an un conjectured harmony of truth :

And yet I've been more moved, more  
raised, I say,

By a simple word . . . a broken easy thing  
A three-years infant might at need re-  
peat,

A look, a sigh, a touch upon the palm,  
Which meant less than 'I love you,'  
than by all

The full-voiced rhetoric of those master-  
mouths.

'Ah, dear Aurora,' he began at last,  
His pale lips fumbling for a sort of smile,  
'Your printer's devils have not spoilt  
your heart :

That's well. And who knows but, long  
years ago

When you and I talked, you were some-  
what right

In being so peevish with me ? You, at  
least,

Have ruined no one through your  
dreams. Instead,

You've helped the facile youth to live  
youth's day

With innocent distraction, still perhaps  
Suggestive of things better than your  
rimes.

The little shepherd-maiden, eight years  
old,

I've seen upon the mountains of Vaucluse,  
Asleep i' the sun, her head upon her  
knees,

The flocks all scattered,—is more laudable  
Than any sheep-dog trained imper-  
fectly,

Who bites the kids through too much zeal,'  
'I look

As if I had slept, then !'

He was touched at once  
By something in my face. Indeed  
'twas sure

That he and I,—despite a year or two  
Of younger life on my side, and on his  
The heaping of the years' work on the  
days,

The three-hour speeches from the  
member's seat,

The hot committees in and out of doors,  
The pamphlets, 'Arguments,' 'Col-  
lective Views,'

Tossed out as straw before sick houses,  
just

To show one's sick and so be trod to dirt  
And no more use,—through this world's  
underground

The burrowing, groping effort, whence  
the arm

And heart come torn,—'twas sure that  
he and I

Were, after all, unequally fatigued ;  
That he, in his developed manhood, stood  
A little sunburnt by the glare of life,  
While I . . . it seemed no sun had shone  
on me,

So many seasons I had missed my  
Springs.

My cheeks had pined and perished from  
their orbs,

And all the youth-blood in them had  
grown white

As dew on autumn cyclamens : alone  
My eyes and forehead answered for my  
face.

He said, 'Aurora, you are changed—  
are ill!'

'Not so, my cousin,—only not asleep,'  
I answered, smiling gently. 'Let it be.  
You scarcely found the poet of Vaucluse  
As drowsy as the shepherds. What is art  
But life upon the larger scale, the higher,  
When, graduating up in a spiral line  
Of still expanding and ascending gyres,  
It pushes toward the intense significance  
Of all things, hungry for the Infinite?  
Art's life,—and where we live, we  
suffer and toil.'

He seemed to sift me with his painful  
eyes.

'You take it gravely, cousin; you refuse  
Your dreamland's right of common, and  
green rest.

You break the mythic turf where danced  
the nymphs,

With crooked ploughs of actual life,—  
let in

The axes to the legendary woods,  
To pay the poll-tax. You are fallen  
indeed

On evil days, you poets, if yourselves  
Can praise that art of yours no otherwise;  
And, if you cannot, . . . better take a trade  
And be of use: 'twere cheaper for your  
youth.'

'Of use!' I softly echoed, 'there's the  
point

We sweep about for ever in argument,  
Like swallows which the exasperate,  
dying year

Sets spinning in black circles, round  
and round,

Preparing for far flights o'er unknown seas.  
And we, where tend we?'

'Where?' he said, and sighed.

'The whole creation, from the hour we  
are born,

Perplexes us with questions. Not a  
stone

But cries behind us, every weary step,  
'Where, where?' I leave stones to reply  
to stones.

Enough for me and for my fleshly heart  
To hearken the invocations of my kind,  
When men catch hold upon my  
shuddering nerves

And shriek, "What help? what hope?  
what bread i' the house.

What fire i' the frost?" There must  
be some response,

Though mine fail utterly. This social  
Sphinx

Who sits between the sepulchres and  
stews,

Makes mock and mow against the crystal  
heavens,

And bullies God,—exacts a word at least  
From each man standing on the side of  
God,

However paying a sphinx-price for it.  
We pay it also if we hold our peace,

In pangs and pity. Let me speak and die.  
Alas, you'll say I speak and kill instead.'

I pressed in there. 'The best men,  
doing their best,

Know peradventure least of what they do:  
Men usefulest i' the world are simply  
used;

The nail that holds the wood, must  
pierce it first,

And He alone who wields the hammer  
sees

The work advanced by the earliest blow.  
Take heart.'

'Ah, if I could have taken yours!' he said,  
'But that's past now.' Then rising,—  
'I will take

At least your kindness and encourage-  
ment.

I thank you. Dear, be happy. Sing  
your songs,

If that's your way! but sometimes  
slumber too,

Nor tire too much with following, out  
of breath,

The rimes upon your mountains of  
Delight.

Reflect, if Art be in truth the higher life,  
You need the lower life to stand upon

In order to reach up unto that higher;  
And none can stand a-tiptoe in the place  
He cannot stand in with two stable feet.

Remember then!—for Art's sake, hold  
your life.'

We parted so. I held him in respect.  
I comprehended what he was in heart  
And sacrificial greatness. Aye, but he

Supposed me a thing too small, to deign  
to know :—

He blew me, plainly, from the crucible  
As some intruding, interrupting fly,  
Not worth the pains of his analysis  
Absorbed on nobler subjects. Hurt a fly!  
He would not for the world: he's pitiful  
To flies even. 'Sing,' says he, 'and  
tease me still,  
If that's your way, poor insect.' That's  
your way!

### FIFTH BOOK

AURORA LEIGH, be humble. Shall I hope  
To speak my poems in mysterious tune  
With man and nature?—with the lava-  
lymph  
That trickles from successive galaxies  
Still dropby drop adown the finger of God  
In still new worlds?—with summer-  
days in this  
That scarce dare breathe they are so  
beautiful?  
With spring's delicious trouble in the  
ground,  
Tormented by the quickened blood of  
roots,  
And softly pricked by golden crocus-  
sheaves  
In token of the harvest-time of flowers?  
With winters and with autumns,—and  
beyond  
With the human heart's large seasons,  
when it hopes  
And fears, joys, grieves, and loves?—  
with all that strain  
Of sexual passion, which devours the flesh  
In a sacrament of souls? with mother's  
breasts  
Which, round the new-made creatures  
hanging there,  
Throb luminous and harmonious like  
pure spheres?—  
With multitudinous life, and finally  
With the great escapings of ecstatic  
souls,  
Who, in a rush of too long prisoned flame,  
Their radiant faces upward, burn away  
This dark of the body, issuing on a world  
Beyond our mortal?—can I speak my  
verse

So plainly in tune to these things and  
the rest.

That men shall feel it catch them on the  
quick,

As having the same warrant over them  
To hold and move them if they will or  
no,

Alike imperious as the primal rhythm  
Of that theurgic nature?—I must fail,  
Who fail at the beginning to hold and  
move

One man,—and he my cousin, and he  
my friend,

And he born tender, made intelligent,  
Inclined to ponder the precipitous sides  
Of difficult questions; yet, obtuse to *me*,  
Of *me*, incurious! likes me very well,  
And wishes me a paradise of good,  
Good looks, good means, and good  
digestion,—aye,

But otherwise evades me, puts me off  
With kindness, with a tolerant gentle-  
ness,—

Too light a book for a grave man's  
reading! Go,

Aurora Leigh: be humble.

There it is,  
We women are too apt to look to one,  
Which proves a certain impotence in  
art.

We strain our natures at doing some-  
thing great,

Far less because it's something great  
to do,

Than haply that we, so, commend  
ourselves

As being not small, and more appreci-  
able

To some one friend. We must have  
mediators

Betwixt our highest conscience and the  
judge;

Some sweet saint's blood must quicken  
in our palms,

Or all the life in heaven seems slow and  
cold:

Good only being perceived as the end  
of good,

And God alone pleased,—that's too  
poor, we think,

And not enough for us by any means.  
Aye—Romney, I remember, told me  
once

We miss the abstract when we comprehend.

We miss it most when we aspire,—and fail.

Yet, so, I will not.—This vile woman's way

Of trailing garments, shall not trip me up :  
I'll have no traffic with the personal thought

In art's pure temple. Must I work in vain,  
Without the approbation of a man ?  
It cannot be ; it shall not. Fame itself,  
That approbation of the general race,  
Presents a poor end (though the arrow speed,

Shot straight with vigorous finger to the white),  
And the highest fame was never reached except

By what was aimed above it. Art for art,  
And good for God Himself, the essential Good !

We'll keep our aims sublime, our eyes erect,  
Although our woman-hands should shake and fail ;

And if we fail . . . But must we ?—  
Shall I fail ?

The Greeks said grandly in their tragic phrase,  
'Let no one be called happy till his death.'

To which I add,—Let no one till his death

Be called unhappy. Measure not the work

Until the day's out and the labour done,  
Then bring your gauges. If the day's work's scant,

Why, call it scant ; affect no compromise ;  
And, in that we have nobly striven at least,

Deal with us nobly, women though we be,  
And honour us with truth if not with praise.

My ballads prospered ; but the ballad's race

Is rapid for a poet who bears weights  
Of thought and golden image. He can stand

Like Atlas, in the sonnet,—and support

His own heavens pregnant with dynastic stars ;

But then he must stand still, nor take a step.

In that descriptive poem called 'The Hills,'

The prospects were too far and indistinct.

'Tis true my critics said, 'A fine view, that !'

The public scarcely cared to climb my book

For even the finest, and the public's right ;

A tree's mere firewood, unless humanized,—

Which well the Greeks knew when they stirred its bark

With close-pressed bosoms of subsiding nymphs,

And made the forest-rivers garrulous  
With babble of gods. For us, we are

called to mark  
A still more intimate humanity

In this inferior nature, or ourselves  
Must fall like dead leaves trodden under-

foot  
By veritable artists. Earth (shut up

By Adam, like a fakir in a box  
Left too long buried) remained stiff and

dry,  
A mere dumb corpse, till Christ the Lord

came down,  
Unlocked the doors, forced open the

blank eyes,  
And used his kingly chrism to straighten

out  
The leathery tongue turned back into the throat ;

Since when, she lives, remembers, palpitates

In every limb, aspires in every breath,  
Embraces infinite relations. Now

We want no half-gods, Panomphaean Joves,

Fauns, Naiads, Tritons, Oreads and the rest,

To take possession of a senseless world  
To unnatural vampire-uses. See the

earth,  
The body of our body, the green earth,

Indubitably human like this flesh

And these articulated veins through  
 which  
 Our heart drives blood. There's not a  
 flower of spring  
 That dies ere June, but vaunts itself  
 allied  
 By issue and symbol, by significance  
 And correspondence, to that spirit-world  
 Outside the limits of our space and time,  
 Where to we are bound. Let poets give  
 it voice  
 With human meanings,—else they miss  
 the thought,  
 And henceforth step down lower, stand  
 confessed  
 Instructed poorly for interpreters,  
 Thrown out by an easy cowslip in the  
 text,  
 Even so my pastoral failed: it was a book  
 Of surface-pictures—pretty, cold, and  
 false  
 With literal transcript,—the worse done,  
 I think,  
 For being not ill-done: let me set my  
 mark  
 Against such doings, and do otherwise.  
 This strikes me.—If the public whom we  
 know  
 Could catch me at such admissions, I  
 should pass  
 For being right modest. Yet how proud  
 we are,  
 In daring to look down upon ourselves!  
 The critics say that epics have died out  
 With Agamemnon and the goat-nursed  
 gods;  
 I'll not believe it. I could never deem  
 As Payne Knight did (the mythic  
 mountaineer  
 Who travelled higher than he was born  
 to live,  
 And showed sometimes the goitre in his  
 throat  
 Discoursing of an image seen through  
 fog),  
 That Homer's heroes measured twelve  
 feet high.  
 They were but men:—his Helen's hair  
 turned grey  
 Like any plain Miss Smith's who wears  
 a front;

And Hector's infant whimpered at a  
 plume  
 As yours last Friday at a turkey-cock.  
 All actual heroes are essential men,  
 And all men possible heroes: every age,  
 Heroic in proportions, double-faced,  
 Looks backward and before, expects a  
 morn  
 And claims an epos.  
 Aye, but every age  
 Appears to souls who live in 't (ask  
 Carlyle)  
 Most unheroic. Ours, for instance, ours:  
 The thinkers scout it, and the poets  
 abound  
 Who scorn to touch it with a finger-tip:  
 A pewter age,—mixed metal, silver-  
 washed;  
 An age of scum, spooned off the richer  
 past,  
 An age of patches for old gaberdines,  
 An age of mere transition, meaning  
 nought  
 Except that what succeeds must shame  
 it quite  
 If God please. That's wrong thinking,  
 to my mind,  
 And wrong thoughts make poor poems.  
 Every age,  
 Through being beheld too close, is ill-  
 discerned  
 By those who have not lived past it.  
 We'll suppose  
 Mount Athos carved, as Alexander  
 schemed,  
 To some colossal statue of a man.  
 The peasants, gathering brushwood in  
 his ear,  
 Had guessed as little as the browsing  
 goats  
 Of form or feature of humanity  
 Up there,—in fact, had travelled five  
 miles off  
 Or ere the giant image broke on them,  
 Full human profile, nose and chin distinct,  
 Mouth, muttering rhythms of silence up  
 the sky  
 And fed at evening with the blood of suns;  
 Grand torso,—hand, that flung perpetu-  
 ally  
 The largesse of a silver river down  
 To all the country pastures. 'Tis even thus  
 With times we live in,—evermore too great

To be apprehended near.

But poets should  
Exert a double vision; should have  
eyes

To see near things as comprehensively  
As if afar they took their point of sight,  
And distant things as intimately deep  
As if they touched them. Let us strive  
for this.

I do distrust the poet who discerns  
No character or glory in his times,  
And trundles back his soul five hundred  
years,

Past moat and drawbridge, into a castle-  
court,

To sing—oh, not of lizard or of toad  
Alive i' the ditch there,—'twere excus-  
able,

But of some black chief, half knight, half  
sheep-lifter,  
Some beauteous dame, half chattel and  
half queen,

As dead as must be, for the greater part,  
The poems made on their chivalric bones;  
And that's no wonder: death inherits  
death.

Nay, if there's room for poets in this  
world

A little overgrown (I think there is),  
Their sole work is to represent the age,  
Their age, not Charlemagne's,—this live,  
throbbing age,

That brawls, cheats, maddens, calculates,  
aspires,

And spends more passion, more heroic  
heat,

Betwixt the mirrors of its drawing-  
rooms,

Than Roland with his knights at Ronces-  
valles.

To flinch from modern varnish, coat or  
flounce,

Cry out for togas and the picturesque,  
Is fatal,—foolish too. King Arthur's self  
Was commonplace to Lady Guenever;  
And Camelot to minstrels seemed as flat  
As Fleet Street to our poets.

Never flinch,  
But still, unscrupulously epic, catch  
Upon the burning lava of a song  
The full-veined, heaving, double-breasted  
Age:

That, when the next shall come, the men  
of that

May touch the impress with reverent  
hand, and say

'Behold,—behold the paps we all have  
sucked!

This bosom seems to beat still, or at least  
It sets ours beating: this is living art,  
Which thus presents and thus records  
true life.'

What form is best for poems? Let me  
think

Of forms less, and the external. Trust  
the spirit,

As sovran nature does, to make the form;  
For otherwise we only imprison spirit

And not embody. Inward evermore  
To outward,—so in life, and so in art

Which still is life.

Five acts to make a play.  
And why not fifteen? why not ten? or  
seven?

What matter for the number of the leaves,  
Supposing the tree lives and grows? exact  
The literal unities of time and place,

When 'tis the essence of passion to  
ignore

Both time and place? Absurd. Keep  
up the fire,

And leave the generous flames to shape  
themselves.

'Tis true the stage requires obsequious-  
ness

To this or that convention; 'exit' here  
And 'enter' there; the points for clap-  
ping, fixed,

Like Jacob's white-peeled rods before  
the rams,

And all the close-curved imagery clipped  
In manner of their fleece at shearing-time.

Forget to prick the galleries to the heart  
Precisely at the fourth act,—culminate

Our five pyramidal acts with one act  
more,—

We're lost so: Shakespeare's ghost  
could scarcely plead

Against our just damnation. Stand aside;  
We'll muse for comfort that, last century,

On this same tragic stage on which we  
have failed,

A wigless Hamlet would have failed the  
same.

And whosoever writes good poetry,  
Looks just to art. He does not write  
for you

Or me,—for London or for Edinburgh ;  
He will not suffer the best critic known  
To step into his sunshine of free thought  
And self-absorbed conception and exact  
An inch-long swerving of the holy lines.  
If virtue done for popularity  
Defiles like vice, can art, for praise or hire,  
Still keep its splendour and remain pure  
art ?

Eschew such serfdom. What the poet  
writes,

He writes : mankind accepts it if it suits,  
And that 's success : if not, the poem 's  
passed

From hand to hand, and yet from hand  
to hand,

Until the unborn snatch it, crying out  
In pity on their fathers' being so dull,  
And that 's success too.

I will write no plays ;  
Because the drama, less sublime in this,  
Makes lower appeals, submits more  
mentally,

Adopts the standard of the public taste  
To chalk its height on, wears a dog-  
chain round

Its regal neck, and learns to carry and  
fetch

The fashions of the day to please the day,  
Fawns close on pit and boxes, who clap  
hands

Commending chiefly its docility  
And humour in stage-tricks,—or else  
indeed .

Gets hissed at, howled at, stamped at  
like a dog,

Or worse, we'll say. For dogs, unjustly  
kicked,

Yell, bite at need ; but if your dramatist  
(Being wronged by some five hundred  
nobodies

Because their grosser brains most natur-  
ally

Misjudge the fineness of his subtle wit)  
Shows teeth an almond's breadth, pro-  
tests the length

Of a modest phrase,—' My gentle  
countrymen,

' There 's something in it haply of your  
fault,'—

Why then, besides five hundred nobodies,  
He'll have five thousand and five thou-  
sand more

Against him,—the whole public,—all  
the hoofs

Of King Saul's father's asses, in full  
drove,

And obviously deserve it. He appealed  
To these,—and why say more if they  
condemn,

Than if they praise him ?—Weep, my  
Aeschylus,

But low and far, upon Sicilian shores !  
For since 'twas Athens (so I read the  
myth)

Who gave commission to that fatal weight  
The tortoise, cold and hard, to drop on  
thee

And crush thee,—better cover thy bald  
head ;

She'll hear the softest hum of Hyblan bee  
Before thy loudest protestation !

Then  
The risk 's still worse upon the modern  
stage :

I could not, for so little, accept success,  
Nor would I risk so much, in ease and  
calm,

For manifest gains : let those who  
prize,

Pursue them : I stand off. And yet,  
forbid,

That any irreverent fancy or conceit  
Should litter in the Drama's throne-room  
where

The rulers of our art, in whose full veins  
Dynastic glories mingle, sit in strength  
And do their kingly work,—conceive,  
command,

And, from the imagination's crucial heat,  
Catch up their men and women all aflame  
For action, all alive and forced to prove  
Their life by living out heart, brain, and  
nerve,

Until mankind makes witness, ' These  
be men

As we are,' and vouchsafes the greeting  
due

To Imogen and Juliet—sweetest kin  
On art's side.

'Tis that, honouring to its worth  
The drama, I would fear to keep it  
down

To the level of the footlights. Dies no more  
 The sacrificial goat, for Bacchus slain,  
 His filmed eyes fluttered by the whirling white  
 Of choral vestures,—troubled in his blood,  
 While tragic voices that clanged keen as swords,  
 Leapt high together with the altar-flame  
 And made the blue air wink. The waxen mask,  
 Which set the grand still front of Themis' son  
 Upon the puckered visage of a player,—  
 The buskin, which he rose upon and moved,  
 As some tall ship first conscious of the wind  
 Sweeps slowly past the piers,—the mouthpiece, where  
 The mere man's voice with all its breaths and breaks  
 Went sheathed in brass, and clashed on even heights  
 Its phrased thunders,—these things are no more,  
 Which once were. And concluding, which is clear,  
 The growing drama has outgrown such toys  
 Of simulated stature, face, and speech,  
 It also peradventure may outgrow  
 The simulation of the painted scene,  
 Boards, actors, prompters, gaslight, and costume,  
 And take for a worthier stage the soul itself,  
 Its shifting fancies and celestial lights,  
 With all its grand orchestral silences  
 To keep the pauses of its rhythmic sounds.

Alas, I still see something to be done,  
 And what I do, falls short of what I see,  
 Though I waste myself on doing. Long green days,  
 Worn bare of grass and sunshine,—long calm nights,  
 From which the silken sleeps were fretted out,  
 Be witness for me, with no amateur's  
 Irreverent haste and busy idleness

I set myself to art! What then? what's done?  
 What's done, at last?  
 Behold, at last, a book.  
 If life-blood's necessary, which it is  
 (By that blue vein athrob on Mahomet's brow,  
 Each prophet-poet's book must show man's blood!),—  
 If life-blood's fertilizing, I wrung mine  
 On every leaf of this,—unless the drops  
 Slid heavily on one side and left it dry.  
 That chances often: many a fervid man  
 Writes books as cold and flat as grave-yard stones  
 From which the lichen's scraped; and if Saint Preux  
 Had written his own letters, as he might,  
 We had never wept to think of the little mole  
 'Neath Julie's drooping eyelid. Passion is  
 But something suffered, after all.

While Art  
 Sets action on the top of suffering:  
 The artist's part is both to be and do,  
 Transfixing with a special, central power  
 The flat experience of the common man,  
 And turning outward, with a sudden wrench,  
 Half agony, half ecstasy, the thing  
 He feels the inmost,—never felt the less  
 Because he sings it. Does a torch less burn  
 For burning next reflectors of blue steel,  
 That *he* should be the colder for his place  
 'Twixt two incessant fires,—his personal life's  
 And that intense refraction which burns back  
 Perpetually against him from the round  
 Of crystal conscience he was born into  
 If artist-born? O sorrowful great gift  
 Conferred on poets, of a twofold life,  
 When one life has been found enough for pain!  
 We, staggering 'neath our burden as mere men,  
 Being called to stand up straight as demi-gods,  
 Support the intolerable strain and stress  
 Of the universal, and send clearly up  
 With voices broken by the human sob,  
 Our poems to find rimes among the stars!

But soft,—a 'poet' is a word soon said,  
A book's a thing soon written. Nay,  
indeed,

The more the poet shall be questionable,  
The more unquestionably comes his  
book.

And this of mine—well, granting to  
myself

Some passion in it,—furling up the  
flats,

Mere passion will not prove a volume  
worth

Its gall and rags even. Bubbles round  
a keel

Mean nought, excepting that the vessel  
moves.

There's more than passion goes to make  
a man

Or book, which is a man too.

I am sad.

I wonder if Pygmalion had these doubts  
And, feeling the hard marble first relent,  
Grow supple to the straining of his arms,  
And tingle through its cold to his  
burning lip,

Supposed his senses mocked, supposed  
the toil

Of stretching past the known and seen  
to reach

The archetypal Beauty out of sight,  
Had made his heart beat fast enough  
for two,

And with his own life dazed and blinded  
him!

Not so; Pygmalion loved,—and whose  
loves

Believes the impossible.

But I am sad:

I cannot thoroughly love a work of mine,  
Since none seems worthy of my thought  
and hope

More highly mated. He has shot them  
down,

My Phoebus Apollo, soul within my soul,  
Who judges, by the attempted, what's  
attained,

And with the silver arrow from his height  
Has struck down all my works before  
my face

While I said nothing. Is there aught  
to say?

I called the artist but a greatened man.  
He may be childless also, like a man.

I laboured on alone. The wind and  
dust

And sun of the world beat blistering  
in my face;

And hope, now for me, now against me,  
dragged

My spirits onward, as some fallen balloon,  
Which, whether caught by blossoming  
tree or bare,

Is torn alike. I sometimes touched my  
aim,

Or seemed,—and generous souls cried  
out, 'Be strong,

Take courage; now you're on our  
level,—now!

The next step saves you!' I was  
flushed with praise,

But, pausing just a moment to draw  
breath,

I could not choose but murmur to myself  
'Is this all? all that's done? and all  
that's gained?

If this then be success, 'tis dismaller  
Than any failure.'

O my God, my God,  
O supreme Artist, who as sole return  
For all the cosmic wonder of Thy work,  
Demandest of us just a word . . a name,  
'My Father!' Thou hast knowledge,  
only Thou,

How dreary 'tis for women to sit still  
On winter nights by solitary fires  
And hear the nations praising them  
far off,

Too far! aye, praising our quick sense  
of love,

Our very heart of passionate womanhood,  
Which could not beat so in the verse  
without

Being present also in the unknissed lips  
And eyes undried because there's  
none to ask

The reason they grew moist.

To sit alone

And think for comfort how, that very  
night,

Affianced lovers, leaning face to face  
With sweet half-listenings for each  
other's breath,

Are reading haply from a page of ours,  
To pause with a thrill (as if their cheeks  
had touched)

When such a stanza, level to their mood,

Seems floating their own thought out—  
 'So I feel  
 For thee,'—'And I, for thee: this poet  
 knows  
 What everlasting love is!'—how, that  
 night,  
 Some father, issuing from the misty roads  
 Upon the luminous round of lamp and  
 hearth  
 And happy children, having caught up  
 first  
 The youngest there until it shrink and  
 shriek  
 To feel the cold chin prick its dimples  
 through  
 With winter from the hills, may throw  
 it the lap  
 Of the eldest (who has learnt to drop  
 her lids  
 To hide some sweetness newer than  
 last year's),  
 Our book and cry, . . . 'Ah you, you  
 care for rimes;  
 So here be rimes to pore on under trees,  
 When April comes to let you! I've  
 been told  
 They are not idle as so many are,  
 But set hearts beating pure as well as fast.  
 'Tis yours, the book; I'll write your  
 name in it,  
 That so you may not lose, however lost  
 In poet's lore and charming reverie,  
 The thought of how your father thought  
 of you  
 In riding from the town.'  
 To have our books  
 Appraised by love, associated with love,  
 While *we* sit loveless! is it hard, you  
 think?  
 At least 'tis mournful. Fame, indeed,  
 'twas said,  
 Means simply love. It was a man said  
 that:  
 And then, there's love and love: the  
 love of all  
 (To risk in turn a woman's paradox),  
 Is but a small thing to the love of one.  
 You bid a hungry child be satisfied  
 With a heritage of many cornfields: nay,  
 He says he's hungry,—he would rather  
 have  
 That little barley-cake you keep from  
 him

While reckoning up his harvests. So  
 with us  
 (Here, Romney, too, we fail to  
 generalize!);  
 We're hungry.  
 Hungry! but it's pitiful  
 To wail like unweaned babes and suck  
 our thumbs  
 Because we're hungry. Who, in all  
 this world  
 (Wherein we are haply set to pray and  
 fast,  
 And learn what good is by its opposite),  
 Has never hungered? Woe to him who  
 has found  
 The meal enough! if Ugolino's full,  
 His teeth have crunched some foul  
 unnatural thing:  
 For here satiety proves penury  
 More utterly irremediable. And since  
 We needs must hunger,—better, for  
 man's love,  
 Than God's truth! better, for companions  
 sweet,  
 Than great convictions! let us bear our  
 weights,  
 Preferring dreary hearths to desert souls.  
 Well, well! they say we're envious,  
 we who rime;  
 But I, because I am a woman perhaps  
 And so rime ill, am ill at envying.  
 I never envied Graham his breadth of  
 style,  
 Which gives you, with a random smutch  
 or two,  
 (Near-sighted critics analyse to smutch)  
 Such delicate perspectives of full life:  
 Nor Belmore, for the unity of aim  
 To which he cuts his cedarn poems, fine  
 As sketchers do their pencils: nor  
 Mark Gage,  
 For that caressing colour and trancing  
 tone  
 Whereby you're swept away and  
 melted in  
 The sensual element, which with a back  
 wave  
 Restores you to the level of pure souls  
 And leaves you with Plotinus. None  
 of these,  
 For native gifts or popular applause,  
 I've envied; but for this,—that when  
 by chance

Says some one,—‘There goes Belmore  
a great man!  
He leaves clean work behind him, and  
requires  
No sweeper-up of the chips,’ . . a girl  
I know,  
Who answers nothing, save with her  
brown eyes,  
Smiles unaware as if a guardian saint  
Smiled in her:—for this, too,—that  
Gage comes home  
And lays his last book’s prodigal review  
Upon his mother’s knee, where, years  
ago,  
He laid his childish spelling-book and  
learned  
To chirp and peck the letters from her  
mouth,  
As young birds must. ‘Well done,’  
she murmured then;  
She will not say it now more wonder-  
ingly:  
And yet the last ‘Well done’ will touch  
him more,  
As catching up to-day and yesterday  
In a perfect chord of love: and so, Mark  
Gage,  
I envy you your mother!—and you,  
Graham,  
Because you have a wife who loves you  
so,  
She half forgets, at moments, to be proud  
Of being Graham’s wife, until a friend  
observes,  
‘The boy here, has his father’s massive  
brow,  
Done small in wax . . if we push back  
the curls.’

Who loves me? Dearest father,—mother  
sweet,—  
I speak the names out sometimes by  
myself,  
And make the silence shiver. They  
sound strange,  
As Hindostanee to an Ind-born man  
Accustomed many years to English  
speech;  
Or lovely poet-words grown obsolete,  
Which will not leave off singing. Up  
in heaven  
I have my father,—with my mother’s  
face

Beside him in a blotch of heavenly light;  
No more for earth’s familiar, household  
use,  
No more. The best verse written by  
this hand,  
Can never reach them where they sit,  
to seem  
Well-done to *them*. Death quite un-  
fellowly us,  
Sets dreadful odds betwixt the live and  
dead,  
And makes us part as those at Babel did  
Through sudden ignorance of a common  
tongue.  
A living Caesar would not dare to play  
At bowls with such as my dead father is.

And yet this may be less so than ap-  
pears,  
This change and separation. Sparrows  
five  
For just two farthings, and God cares  
for each.  
If God is not too great for little cares,  
Is any creature, because gone to God?  
I’ve seen some men, veracious, nowise  
mad,  
Who have thought or dreamed, declared  
and testified,  
They heard the Dead a-ticking like  
a clock  
Which strikes the hours of the eternities,  
Beside them, with their natural ears,—  
and known  
That human spirits feel the human way  
And hate the unreasoning awe which  
waves them off  
From possible communion. It may be.

At least, earth separates as well as  
heaven.  
For instance, I have not seen Romney  
Leigh  
Full eighteen months . . add six, you  
get two years.  
They say he’s very busy with good  
works,—  
Has parted Leigh Hall into almshouses.  
He made one day an almshouse of his  
heart,  
Which ever since is loose upon the latch  
For those who pull the string.—I never  
did.

It always makes me sad to go abroad,  
And now I'm sadder that I went to-night  
Among the lights and talkers at Lord  
Howe's.

His wife is gracious, with her glossy  
braids,  
And even voice, and gorgeous eyeballs,  
calm  
As her other jewels. If she's somewhat  
cold,  
Who wonders, when her blood has  
stood so long

In the ducal reservoir she calls her line  
By no means arrogantly? she's not  
proud;

Not prouder than the swan is of the lake  
He has always swum in;—'tis her  
element;

And so she takes it with a natural  
grace,

Ignoring tadpoles. She just knows,  
perhaps,

There *are* who travel without outriders,  
Which isn't her fault. Ah, to watch her  
face.

When good Lord Howe expounds his  
theories

Of social justice and equality!

'Tis curious, what a tender, tolerant bend  
Her neck takes: for she loves him,  
likes his talk,

'Such clever talk—that dear, odd  
Algernon!'

She listens on, exactly as if he talked  
Some Scandinavian myth of Lemures,  
Too pretty to dispute, and too absurd.

She's gracious to me as her husband's  
friend,

And would be gracious, were I not  
a Leigh,

Being used to smile just so, without her  
eyes,

On Joseph Strangways, the Leeds  
mesmerist,

And Delia Dobbs, the lecturer from  
'the States'

Upon the 'Woman's question.' Then,  
for him,

I like him; he's my friend. And all  
the rooms

Were full of crinkling silks that swept  
about

The fine dust of most subtle courtesies.  
What then?—why then, we come home  
to be sad.

How lovely, One I love not looked to-  
night!

She's very pretty, Lady Waldemar.

Her maid must use both hands to twist  
that coil

Of tresses, then be careful lest the rich  
Bronze rounds should slip:—she missed,  
though, a grey hair,

A single one,—I saw it; otherwise

The woman looked immortal. How  
they told,

Those alabaster shoulders and bare  
breasts,

On which the pearls, drowned out of  
sight in milk,

Were lost, excepting for the ruby-clasp!

They split the amaranth velvet-bodice  
down

To the waist or nearly, with the  
audacious press

Of full-breathed beauty. If the heart  
within

Were half as white!—but, if it were,  
perhaps

The breast were closer covered and the  
sight

Less aspectable, by half, too.

I heard  
The young man with the German  
student's look—

A sharp face, like a knife in a cleft stick,  
Which shot up straight against the  
parting line

So equally dividing the long hair,—

Say softly to his neighbour (thirty-five  
And mediaeval), 'Look that way, Sir  
Blaise.

She's Lady Waldemar—to the left,—  
in red—

Whom Romney Leigh, our ablest man  
just now,

Is soon about to marry.'

Then replied  
Sir Blaise Delorme, with quiet, priest-  
like voice,

Too used to syllable damnations round  
To make a natural emphasis worth while:

'Is Leigh your ablest man? the same,  
I think,

Once jilted by a recreant pretty maid  
 Adopted from the people! Now, in  
     change,  
 He seems to have plucked a flower from  
     the other side  
 Of the social hedge.'  
     'A flower, a flower,' exclaimed  
 My German student,—his own eyes  
     full-blown  
 Bent on her. He was twenty, certainly.

Sir Blaise resumed with gentle arrogance,  
 As if he had dropped his alms into a hat  
 And gained the right to counsel,—'My  
     young friend,  
 I doubt thy ablest man's ability  
 To get the least good or help meet for  
     him,  
 For pagan phalanstery or Christian home,  
 From such a flowery creature.'

'Beautiful!'

My student murmured rapt,—'Mark  
     how she stirs!  
 Just waves her head, as if a flower  
     indeed,  
 Touched far off by the vain breath of  
     our talk.'

At which that bilious Grimwald (he  
     who writes  
 For the Renovator), who had seemed  
     absorbed  
 Upon the table-book of autographs  
 (I dare say mentally he crunched the  
     bones

Of all those writers, wishing them alive  
 To feel his tooth in earnest), turned  
     short round  
 With low carnivorous laugh,—'A flower,  
     of course!  
 She neither sews nor spins,—and takes  
     no thought  
 Of her garments . . . falling off.'

The student flinched;  
 Sir Blaise, the same; then both, draw-  
     ing back their chairs  
 As if they spied black-beetles on the floor,  
 Pursued their talk, without a word  
     being thrown  
 To the critic.

Good Sir Blaise's brow is high  
 And noticeably narrow: a strong wind,  
 You fancy, might unroof him suddenly,

And blow that great top attic off his  
     head  
 So piled with feudal relics. You admire  
 His nose in profile, though you miss  
     his chin;  
 But, though you miss his chin, you  
     seldom miss  
 His ebony cross worn innermost  
     (carved  
 For penance by a saintly Styrian monk  
 Whose flesh was too much with him),  
     slipping through  
 Some unaware unbuttoned casualty  
 Of the under-waistcoat. With an absent  
     air  
 Sir Blaise sate fingering it and speaking  
     low,  
 While I, upon the sofa, heard it all.

'My dear young friend, if we could  
     bear our eyes,  
 Like blessed Saint Lucy, on a plate,  
 They would not trick us into choosing  
     wives,  
 As doublets, by the colour. Otherwise  
 Our fathers chose,—and therefore,  
     when they had hung  
 Their household keys about a lady's  
     waist,  
 The sense of duty gave her dignity;  
 She kept her bosom holy to her babes,  
 And, if a moralist reproved her dress,  
 'Twas, "Too much starch!"—and not,  
     "Too little lawn!"

'Now, pshaw!' returned the other in  
     a heat,  
 A little fretted by being called 'young  
     friend,'  
 Or so I took it,—'for Saint Lucy's sake,  
 If she's the saint to swear by, let us  
     leave  
 Our fathers,—plagued enough about our  
     sons!'  
 (He stroked his beardless chin), 'yes,  
     plagued, sir, plagued:  
 The future generations lie on us  
 As heavy as the nightmare of a seer;  
 Our meat and drink grow painful  
     prophecy:  
 I ask you,—have we leisure, if we liked,  
 To hollow out our weary hands to keep  
 Your intermittent rushlight of the past

From draughts in lobbies? Prejudice of sex

And marriage-law . . . the socket drops them through

While we two speak,—however may protest

Some over-delicate nostrils like your own,

'Gainst odours thence arising.'

'You are young,'

Sir Blaise objected.

'If I am,' he said

With fire,—'though somewhat less so than I seem,

The young run on before, and see the thing

That's coming. Reverence for the young, I cry.

In that new church for which the world's near ripe,

You'll have the younger in the Elder's chair,

Presiding with his ivory front of hope O'er foreheads clawed by cruel carrion-birds

Of life's experience.'

'Pray your blessing, sir,'

Sir Blaise replied good-humouredly,—  
'I plucked

A silver hair this morning from my beard, Which left me your inferior. Would I were

Eighteen and worthy to admonish you! If young men of your order run before

To see such sights as sexual prejudice And marriage-law dissolved,—in plainer words,

A general concubinage expressed In a universal pruriency,—the thing

Is scarce worth running fast for, and you'd gain

By loitering with your elders.'

'Ah,' he said,

'Who, getting to the top of Pisgah-hill, Can talk with one at bottom of the view,

To make it comprehensible? Why, Leigh Himself, although our ablest man, I said,

Is scarce advanced to see as far as this, Which some are : he takes up imperfectly

The social question—by one handle—leaves

The rest to trail. A Christian socialist Is Romney Leigh, you understand.'

'Not I.

I disbelieve in Christian-pagans, much As you in women-fishes. If we mix

Two colours, we lose both, and make a third

Distinct from either. Mark you! to mistake

A colour is the sign of a sick brain, And mine, I thank the saints, is clear

and cool :

A neutral tint is here impossible.

The church,—and by the church, I mean of course

The catholic, apostolic, mother-church,— Draws lines as plain and straight as her

own wall ;

Inside of which, are Christians, obviously, And outside . . . dogs.'

'We thank you. Well I know

The ancient mother-church would fain still bite,

For all her toothless gums,—as Leigh himself

Would fain be a Christian still, for all his wit.

Pass that ; you two may settle it, for me. You're slow in England. In a month

I learnt At Göttingen enough philosophy

To stock your English schools for fifty years ;

Pass that, too. Here alone, I stop you short,

—Supposing a true man like Leigh could stand

Unequal in the stature of his life To the height of his opinions. Choose

a wife Because of a smooth skin?—not he, not he!

He'd rail at Venus' self for creaking shoes,

Unless she walked his way of righteousness :

And if he takes a Venus Meretrix (No imputation on the lady there),

Be sure that, by some sleight of Christian art,

He has metamorphosed and converted her To a Blessed Virgin.'

'Soft !' Sir Blaise drew breath

As if it hurt him,—‘Soft! no blasphemy,  
I pray you!’

‘The first Christians did the thing:  
Whynotthelast?’ asked he of Göttingen,  
With just that shade of sneering on the  
lip,

Compensates for the lagging of the  
beard,—

‘And so the case is. If that fairest fair  
Is talked of as the future wife of Leigh,  
She’s talked of too, at least as certainly,  
As Leigh’s disciple. You may find her  
name

On all his missions and commissions,  
schools,

Asylums, hospitals,—he had her down,  
With other ladies whom her starry lead  
Persuaded from their spheres, to his  
country-place

In Shropshire, to the famed phalanstery  
At Leigh Hall, christianized from  
Fourier’s own

(In which he has planted out his sapling  
stocks

Of knowledge into social nurseries),  
And there, they say, she has tarried  
half a week,

And milked the cows, and churned, and  
pressed the curd,

And said “my sister” to the lowest drab  
Of all the assembled castaways; such  
girls!

Aye, sided with them at the washing-  
tub—

Conceive, Sir Blaise, those naked  
perfect arms,

Round glittering arms, plunged elbow-  
deep in suds,

Like wild swans hid in lilies all a-shake.’

Lord Howe came up. ‘What, talking  
poetry

So near the image of the unfavouring  
Muse?

That’s you, Miss Leigh: I’ve watched  
you half an hour,

Precisely as I watched the statue called  
A Pallas in the Vatican;—you mind

The face, Sir Blaise?—intensely calm  
and sad,

As wisdom cut it off from fellowship,—  
But *that* spoke louder. Not a word  
from you!

And these two gentlemen were bold,  
I marked,

And unabashed by even your silence.’

‘Ah,’  
Said I, ‘my dear Lord Howe, you shall  
not speak

To a printing woman who has lost her  
place

(The sweet safe corner of the household  
fire

Behind the heads of children), compli-  
ments.

As if she were a woman. We who  
have clipt

The curls before our eyes, may see at  
least

As plain as men do. Speak out, man  
to man;

No compliments, beseech you.’

‘Friend to friend,  
Let that be. We are sad to-night, I  
saw

(—Good night, Sir Blaise! ah, Smith—  
he has slipped away),

I saw you across the room, and stayed,  
Miss Leigh,

To keep a crowd of lion-hunters off,  
With faces toward your jungle. There  
were three;

A spacious lady, five feet ten and fat,  
Who has the devil in her (and there’s  
room),

For walking to and fro upon the earth,  
From Chipewa to China; she requires

Your autograph upon a tinted leaf  
‘Twixt Queen Pomare’s and Emperor

Soulouque’s.

Pray give it; she has energies, though fat:  
For me, I’d rather see a rick on fire

Than such a woman angry. Then  
a youth

Fresh from the backwoods, green as  
the underboughs,

Asks modestly, Miss Leigh, to kiss your  
shoe,

And adds, he has an epic in twelve parts,  
Which when you’ve read, you’ll do it  
for his boot:

All which I saved you, and absorb next  
week

Both manuscript and man,—because a  
lord

Is still more potent than a poetess

With any extreme republican. Ah, ah,  
You smile, at last, then.'

'Thank you.'

'Leave the smile.'

I'll lose the thanks for't,—aye, and  
throw you in

My transatlantic girl, with golden eyes,  
That draw you to her splendid whiteness

as

The pistil of a water-lily draws,  
Adust with gold. Those girls across the  
sea

Are tyrannously pretty,—and I swore  
(She seemed to me an innocent, frank girl)  
To bring her to you for a woman's kiss,  
Not now, but on some other day or week:  
—We'll call it perjury; I give her up.'

'No, bring her.'

'Now,' said he, 'you make it hard  
To touch such goodness with a grimy  
palm.

I thought to tease you well, and fret you  
cross,

And steel myself, when rightly vexed  
with you,

For telling you a thing to tease you more.'

'Of Romney?'

'No, no; nothing worse,' he cried,  
'Of Romney Leigh than what is buzzed  
about,—

That *he* is taken in an eye-trap too,  
Likemany halves wise. The thing I mean  
Refers to you, not him.'

'Refers to me.'

He echoed,—'Me! You sound it like a  
stone

Dropped down a dry well very listlessly  
By one who never thinks about the toad  
Alive at the bottom. Presently perhaps  
You'll sound your "*me*" more proudly—  
till I shrink.'

'Lord Howe's the toad, then, in this  
question?'

'Brief,

We'll take it graver. Give me sofa-room,  
And quiet hearing. You know Eglinton,  
John Eglinton, of Eglinton in Kent?'

'Is *he* the toad?—he's rather like the  
snail,

Known chiefly for the house upon his  
back :

Divide the man and house—you kill the  
man ;

That's Eglinton of Eglinton, Lord  
Howe.'

He answered grave. 'A reputable man,  
An excellent landlord of the olden stamp  
If somewhat slack in new philanthro-  
pies,

Who keeps his birthdays with a tenants'  
dance,

Is hard upon them when they miss the  
church

Or hold their children back from  
catechism,

But not ungentle when the aged poor  
Pick sticks at hedge-sides: nay, I've  
heard him say,

"The old dame has a twinge because she  
stoops ;

That's punishment enough for felony."'

'O tender-hearted landlord! may I take  
My long lease with him, when the time  
arrives

For gathering winter-faggots!'

'He likes art,  
Buys books and pictures . . of a certain  
kind ;

Neglects no patent duty ; a good son' . .

'To a most obedient mother. Born to  
wear

His father's shoes, he wears her hus-  
band's too :

Indeed I've heard it's touching. Dear  
Lord Howe,

You shall not praise *me* so against your  
heart,

When I'm at worst for praise and faggots.'

'Be  
Less bitter with me, for . . in short,' he  
said,

'I have a letter, which he urged me so  
To bring you . . I could scarcely choose  
but yield ;

Insisting that a new love, passing through  
The hand of an old friendship, caught  
from it

Some reconciling odour.'

'Love, you say!  
My lord, I cannot love: I only find . .

The rime for love,—and that's not love,  
my lord.

Take back your letter.'

'Pause: you'll read it first?'

'I will not read it: it is stereotyped;  
The same he wrote to,—anybody's name,  
Anne Blythe the actress, when she died  
so true,

A duchess fainted in a private box:  
Pauline the dancer, after the great *pas*  
In which her little feet winked overhead  
Like other fire-flies, and amazed the pit:  
Or Baldinacci, when her F in alt  
Had touched the silver tops of heaven  
itself

With such a pungent spirit-dart, the  
Queen

Laid softly, each to each, her white-  
gloved palms,  
And sighed for joy: or else (I thank  
your friend)

Aurora Leigh,—when some indifferent  
rimes,

Like those the boys sang round the holy ox  
On Memphis-highway, chance perhaps  
to set

Our Apis-public lowing. Oh, he wants,  
Instead of any worthy wife at home,  
A star upon his stage of Eglinton?

Advise him that he is not overshrewd  
In being so little modest: a dropped star  
Makes bitter waters, says a Book I've  
read,—

And there's his unread letter.'

'My dear friend,'

Lord Howe began . .

In haste I tore the phrase.

'You mean your friend of Eglinton, or  
me?'

'I mean you, you,' he answered with  
some fire.

'A happy life means prudent compromise;  
The tare runs through the farmer's  
garnered sheaves,  
And though the gleaner's apron holds  
pure wheat

We count her poorer. Tare with wheat,  
we cry,

And good with drawbacks. You, you  
love your art,

And, certain of vocation, set your soul  
On utterance. Only, in this world we  
have made

(They say God made it first, but if He did  
'Twas so long since, and, since, we have  
spoiled it so,

He scarce would know it, if He looked  
this way,

From hells we preach of, with the flames  
blown out),

—In this bad, twisted, topsy-turvy world  
Where all the heaviest wrongs get  
uppermost,—

In this uneven, unfostering England here,  
Where ledger-strokes and sword-strokes  
count indeed,

But soul-strokes merely tell upon the flesh  
They strike from,—it is hard to stand  
for art,

Unless some golden tripod from the sea  
Be fished up, by Apollo's divine chance,

To throne such feet as yours, my  
prophets,

At Delphi. Think,—the god comes  
down as fierce

As twenty bloodhounds, shakes you,  
strangles you,

Until the oracular shriek shall ooze in  
froth!

At best 'tis not all ease,—at worst too  
hard:

A place to stand on is a 'vantage gained,  
And here's your tripod. To be plain,  
dear friend,

You're poor, except in what you richly  
give;

You labour for your own bread painfully,  
Or ere you pour our wine. For art's  
sake, pause.'

I answered slow,—as some wayfaring  
man,

Who feels himself at night too far from  
home

Makes steadfast face against the bitter  
wind.

'Is art so less a thing than virtue is,  
That artists first must cater for their  
ease

Or ever they make issue past themselves  
To generous use? alas, and is it so,

That we, who would be somewhat clean,  
must sweep

Our ways as well as walk them, and no friend

Confirm us nobly,—“Leave results to God,

But you, be clean?” What! “prudent compromise

Makes acceptable life,” you say instead, You, you, Lord Howe?—in things indifferent, well.

For instance, compromise the wheaten bread

For rye, the meat for lentils, silk for serge, And sleep on down, if needs, for sleep on straw;

But there, end compromise. I will not bate

One artist-dream on straw or down, my lord,

Nor pinch my liberal soul, though I be poor,

Nor cease to love high, though I live thus low.’

So speaking, with less anger in my voice Than sorrow, I rose quickly to depart; While he, thrown back upon the noble shame

Of such high-stumbling natures, murmured words,

The right words after wrong ones. Ah, the man

Is worthy, but so given to entertain Impossible plans of superhuman life,— He sets his virtues on so raised a shelf, To keep them at the grand millennial height,

He has to mount a stool to get at them; And, meantime, lives on quite the common way,

With everybody’s morals.

As we passed, Lord Howe insisting that his friendly arm Should oar me across the sparkling brawling stream

Which swept from room to room,—we fell at once

On Lady Waldemar. ‘Miss Leigh,’ she said,

And gave me such a smile, so cold and bright,

As if she tried it in a ‘tiring glass And liked it; ‘all to-night I’ve strained at you

As babes at baubles held up out of reach By spiteful nurses (“Never snatch,” they say),

And there you sate, most perfectly shut in By good Sir Blaise and clever Mister Smith

And then our dear Lord Howe! at last indeed

I almost snatched. I have a world to speak About your cousin’s place in Shropshire, where

I’ve been to see his work . . . our work, —you heard

I went? . . . and of a letter yesterday, In which if I should read a page or two You might feel interest, though you’re locked of course

In literary toil.—You’ll like to hear Your last book lies at the phalanstery, As judged innocuous for the elder girls And younger women who still care for books.

We all must read, you see, before we live,

Till slowly the ineffable light comes up And, as it deepens, drowns the written word,—

So said your cousin, while we stood and felt

A sunset from his favourite beech-tree seat.

He might have been a poet if he would, But then he saw the higher thing at once And climbed to it. I think he looks well now,

Has quite got over that unfortunate . . . Ah, ah . . . I know it moved you. Tender heart!

You took a liking to the wretched girl. Perhaps you thought the marriage suitable,

Who knows? a poet hankers for romance, And so on. As for Romney Leigh, ’tis sure

He never loved her,—never. By the way, You have not heard of her . . . ? quite out of sight,

And out of saving? lost in every sense?’

She might have gone on talking half an hour

And I stood still, and cold, and pale, I think,

As a garden-statue a child pelts with snow  
For pretty pastime. Every now and  
then

I put in 'yes' or 'no,' I scarce knew why;  
The blind man walks wherever the dog  
pulls,  
And so I answered. Till Lord Howe  
broke in;

'What penance takes the wretch who  
interrupts

The talk of charming women? I, at last,  
Must brave it. Pardon, Lady Waldemar!  
The lady on my arm is tired, unwell,  
And loyally I've promised she shall say  
No harder word this evening, than . .  
good night;

The rest her face speaks for her.'—Then  
we went.

And I breathe large at home. I drop  
my cloak,  
Unclasp my girdle, loose the band that ties  
My hair . . . now could I but unloose my  
soul!

We are sepulchred alive in this close  
world,  
And want more room.

The charming woman there—  
This reckoning up and writing down her  
talk

Affects me singularly. How she talked  
To pain me! woman's spite.—You wear  
steel-mail;

A woman takes a housewife from her  
breast

And plucks the delicatest needle out  
As 'twere a rose, and pricks you carefully  
'Neath nails, 'neath eyelids, in your  
nostrils,—say,

A beast would roar so tortured,—but  
a man,

A human creature, must not, shall not  
flinch,

No, not for shame.

What vexes, after all,  
Is just that such as she, with such as I,  
Knows how to vex. Sweet heaven, she  
takes me up

As if she had fingered me and dog-eared  
me

And spelled me by the fireside half a life!  
She knows my turns, my feeble points.  
—What then?

The knowledge of a thing implies the  
thing;

Of course, she found *that* in me, she saw  
*that*,

Her pencil underscored *this* for a fault,  
And I, still ignorant. Shut the book  
up,—close!

And crush that beetle in the leaves.

O heart,  
At last we shall grow hard too, like the  
rest,

And call it self-defence because we are  
soft.

And after all, now, . . why should I be  
pained

That Romney Leigh, my cousin, should  
espouse

This Lady Waldemar! And, say, she held  
Her newly-blossomed gladness in my  
face, . . .

'Twas natural surely, if not generous,  
Considering how, when winter held her  
fast,

I helped the frost with mine, and pained  
her more

Than she pains me. Pains me!—but  
wherefore pained?

'Tis clear my cousin Romney wants  
a wife,—

So, good!—The man's need of the wo-  
man, here,

Is greater than the woman's of the man,  
And easier served; for where the man  
discerns

A sex (ah, ah, the man can generalize,  
Said he), we see but one, ideally

And really: where we yearn to lose  
ourselves

And melt like white pearls in another's  
wine,

He seeks to double himself by what he  
loves,

And make his drink more costly by our  
pearls.

At board, at bed, at work and holiday,  
It is not good for man to be alone,

And that's his way of thinking, first and  
last,

And thus my cousin Romney wants a wife.

But then my cousin sets his dignity  
On personal virtue. If he understands

By love, like others, self-aggrandizement,  
It is that he may verily be great  
By doing rightly and kindly. Once he  
thought,

For charitable ends set duly forth  
In Heaven's white judgement-book, to  
marry . . ah,

We'll call her name Aurora Leigh, al-  
though

She's changed since then!—and once,  
for social ends,

Poor Marian Erle, my sister Marian Erle,  
My woodland sister, sweet maid Marian,  
Whose memory moans on in me like the  
wind

Through ill-shut casements, making me  
more sad

Than ever I find reasons for. Alas,  
Poor pretty plaintive face, embodied  
ghost!

He finds it easy then, to clap thee off  
From pulling at his sleeve and book and  
pen,—

He locks thee out at night into the cold  
Away from butting with thy horny eyes  
Against his crystal dreams, that now  
he's strong

To love anew? that Lady Waldemar  
Succeeds my Marian?

After all, why not?

He loved not Marian, more than once he  
loved

Aurora. If he loves at last that Third,  
Albeit she prove as slippery as spilt oil  
On marble floors, I will not augur him  
Ill-luck for that. Good love, howe'er  
ill-placed,

Is better for a man's soul in the end,  
Than if he loved ill what deserves love  
well.

A pagan, kissing for a step of Pan  
The wild-goat's hoof-print on the loamy  
down,

Exceeds our modern thinker who turns  
back

The strata . . granite, limestone, coal,  
and clay,

Concluding coldly with, 'Here's law!  
where's God?'

And then at worse,—if Romney loves  
her not,—

At worst,—if he's incapable of love,

Which may be—then indeed, for such  
a man

Incapable of love, she's good enough;  
For she, at worst too, is a woman still  
And loves him . . as the sort of woman  
can.

My loose long hair began to burn and  
creep,

Alive to the very ends, about my knees:  
I swept it backward as the wind sweeps  
flame,

With the passion of my hands. Ah,  
Romney laughed

One day . . (how full the memories come  
up!)

'—Your Florence fire-flies live on in  
your hair,'

He said, 'it gleams so.' Well, I wrung  
them out,

My fire-flies; made a knot as hard as life  
Of those loose, soft, impracticable curls,  
And then sat down and thought . . 'She  
shall not think

Her thought of me,'—and drew my desk  
and wrote.

'Dear Lady Waldemar, I could not speak  
With people round me, nor can sleep  
to-night

And not speak, after the great news  
I heard

Of you and of my cousin. May you be  
Most happy; and the good he meant the  
world,

Replenish his own life. Say what I say,  
And let my word be sweeter for your  
mouth,

As you are *you* . . I only Aurora Leigh.'

That's quiet, guarded: though she hold  
it up

Against the light, she'll not see through  
it more

Than lies there to be seen. So much  
for pride;

And now for peace, a little. Let me stop  
All writing back . . 'Sweet thanks, my  
sweetest friend,

You've made more joyful my great joy  
itself'

—No, that's too simple! she would  
twist it thus,

'My joy would still be as sweet as thyme  
in drawers,  
However shut up in the dark and dry;  
But violets, aired and dewed by love-like  
yours,  
Out-smell all thyme: we keep that in our  
clothes,  
But drop the other down our bosoms till  
They smell like' . . . ah, I see her writing  
back

Just so. She'll make a nosegay of her  
words,  
And tie it with blue ribbons at the end  
To suit a poet;—pshaw!

And then we'll have  
The call to church, the broken, sad, bad  
dream  
Dreamed out at last, the marriage-vow  
complete  
With the marriage-breakfast; praying in  
white gloves,  
Drawn off in haste for drinking pagan  
toasts  
In somewhat stronger wine than any  
sipped  
By gods since Bacchus had his way with  
grapes.

A postscript stops all that and rescues me.  
'You need not write. I have been over-  
worked,

And think of leaving London, England  
even,  
And hastening to get nearer to the sun  
Where men sleep better. So, adieu.'—  
I fold

And seal,—and now I'm out of all the  
coil;

I breathe now, I spring upward like  
a branch

The ten-years schoolboy with a crooked  
stick

May pull down to his level in search of  
nuts,

But cannot hold a moment. How we  
twang

Back on the blue sky, and assert our  
height,

While he stares after! Now, the wonder  
seems

That I could wrong myself by such  
a doubt.

We poets always have uneasy hearts,

Because our hearts, large-rounded as the  
globe,

Can turn but one side to the sun at once.  
We are used to dip our artist-hands in gall  
And potash, trying potentialities  
Of alternated colour, till at last  
We get confused, and wonder for our skin  
How nature tinged it first. Well—here's  
the true

Good flesh-colour; I recognize my hand,—  
Which Romney Leigh may clasp as just  
a friend's,

And keep his clean.

And now, my Italy.  
Alas, if we could ride with naked souls  
And make no noise and pay no price at all,  
I would have seen thee sooner, Italy,  
For still I have heard thee crying through  
my life,  
Thou piercing silence of ecstatic graves,  
Men call that name!

But even a witch to-day  
Must melt down golden pieces in the nard  
Wherewith to anoint her broomstick ere  
she rides;

And poets evermore are scant of gold,  
And if they find a piece behind the door  
It turns by sunset to a withered leaf.  
The Devil himself scarce trusts his  
patented

Gold-making art to any who make rimes,  
But culls his Faustus from philosophers  
And not from poets. 'Leave my Job,'  
said God;

And so the Devil leaves him without  
pence,

And poverty proves plainly special grace.  
In these new, just, administrative times  
Men clamour for an order of merit: why?  
Here's black bread on the table and no  
wine!

At least I am a poet in being poor,  
Thank God. I wonder if the manuscript  
Of my long poem, if 'twere sold outright,  
Would fetch enough to buy me shoes to go  
Afoot (thrown in, the necessary patch  
For the otherside the Alps)? It cannot be.  
I fear that I must sell this residue  
Of my father's books, although the Elze-  
virs

Have fly-leaves over-written by his hand

In faded notes as thick and fine and brown  
As cobwebs on a tawny monument  
Of the old Greeks—*conferenda haec cum*  
*his*—

*Corrupti citat—lege potius,*  
And so on, in the scholar's regal way  
Of giving judgement on the parts of speech,  
As if he sat on all twelve thrones up-  
piled,  
Arraigning Israel. Aye, but books and  
notes

Must go together. And this Proclus too,  
In these dear quaint contracted Grecian  
types,  
Fantastically crumpled like his thoughts  
Which would not seem too plain; you  
go round twice  
For one step forward, then you take it  
back

Because you're somewhat giddy; there's  
the rule  
For Proclus. Ah, I stained this middle  
leaf

With pressing in 't my Florence iris-bell,  
Long stalk and all: my father chided me  
For that stain of blue blood,—I recollect  
The peevish turn his voice took,—'Silly  
girls,

Who plant their flowers in our philo-  
sophy

To make it fine, and only spoil the book!  
No more of it, Aurora.' Yes—no more!  
Ah, blame of love, that's sweeter than  
all praise

Of those who love not! 'tis so lost to  
me,  
I cannot, in such beggared life, afford  
To lose my Proclus,—not for Florence  
even.

The kissing Judas, Wolff, shall go in-  
stead,

Who builds us such a royal book as this  
To honour a chief-poet, folio-built,  
And writes above, 'The house of No-  
body!'

Who floats in cream, as rich as any  
sucked

From Juno's breasts, the broad Homeric  
lines,

And, while with their spondaic prodigi-  
ous mouths

They lap the lucent margins as babe-gods,

Proclaims them bastards. Wolff's an  
atheist;

And if the Iliad fell out, as he says,  
By mere fortuitous concourse of old  
songs,

Conclude as much too for the universe.

That Wolff, those Platos: sweep the  
upper shelves

As clean as this, and so I am almost rich,  
Which means, not forced to think of  
being poor

In sight of ends. To-morrow: no delay.

I'll wait in Paris till good Carrington

Dispose of such and, having chaffered for

My book's price with the publisher, direct

All proceeds to me. Just a line to ask

His help.

And now I come, my Italy,  
My own hills! Are you 'ware of me, my  
hills,

How I burn toward you? do you feel  
to-night

The urgency and yearning of my soul,

As sleeping mothers feel the sucking babe

And smile?—Nay, not so much as when  
in heat

Vain lightnings catch at your inviolate  
tops

And tremble while ye are steadfast. Still  
ye go

Your own determined, calm, indifferent  
way

Toward sunrise, shade by shade, and  
light by light,

Of all the grand progression nought left  
out,

As if God verily made you for yourselves  
And would not interrupt your life with  
ours.

## SIXTH BOOK

THE English have a scornful insular way  
Of calling the French light. The levity  
Is in the judgement only, which yet stands,  
For say a foolish thing but oft enough  
(And here's the secret of a hundred  
creeds,

Men get opinions as boys learn to spell,  
By reiteration chiefly), the same thing  
Shall pass at last for absolutely wise,

And not with fools exclusively. And so  
We say the French are light, as if we said  
The cat mews or the milch-cow gives us  
milk :

Say rather, cats are milked and milch-  
cows mew ;

For what is lightness but inconsequence,  
Vague fluctuation 'twixt effect and cause  
Compelled by neither? Is a bullet light,  
That dashes from the gun-mouth, while  
the eye

Winks and the heart beats one, to flatten  
itself

To a wafer on the white speck on a wall  
A hundred paces off? Even so direct,  
So sternly undivertible of aim,  
Is this French people.

All, idealists

Too absolute and earnest, with them all  
The idea of a knife cuts real flesh ;  
And still, devouring the safe interval  
Which Nature placed between the  
thought and act

With those too fiery and impatient souls,  
They threaten conflagration to the world,  
And rush with most unscrupulous logic on  
Impossible practice. Set your orators  
To blow upon them with loud windy  
mouths

Through watchword phrases, jest or  
sentiment,

Which drive our burly brutal English  
mobs

Like so much chaff, whichever way they  
blow,—

This light French people will not thus  
be driven.

They turn indeed,—but then they turn  
upon

Some central pivot of their thought and  
choice,

And veer out by the force of holding fast.  
That's hard to understand, for English-  
men

Unused to abstract questions, and un-  
trained

To trace the involutions, valve by valve,  
In each orb'd bulb-root of a general truth,  
And mark what subtly fine integument  
Divides opposed compartments. Free-  
dom's self

Comes concrete to us, to be understood,  
Fixed in a feudal form incarnately

To suit our ways of thought and reverence,  
The special form, with us, being still the  
thing.

With us, I say, though I'm of Italy  
By mother's birth and grave, by father's  
grave

And memory ; let it be ;—a poet's heart  
Can swell to a pair of nationalities,  
However ill-lodged in a woman's breast.

And so I am strong to love this noble  
France,

This poet of the nations, who dreams on  
And wails on (while the household goes  
to wreck)

For ever, after some ideal good,—  
Some equal poise of sex, some unvoiced  
love

Inviolable, some spontaneous brother-  
hood,

Some wealth that leaves none poor and  
finds none tired,

Some freedom of the many that respects  
The wisdom of the few. Heroic dreams!

Sublime, to dream so ; natural, to wake:  
And sad, to use such lofty scaffoldings,  
Erected for the building of a church,

To build instead a brothel or a prison—  
May God save France!

And if at last she sighs  
Her great soul up into a great man's face,  
To flush his temples out so gloriously  
That few dare carp at Caesar for being bald,  
What then?—this Caesar represents, not  
reigns,

And is no despot, though twice absolute:  
This Head has all the people for a heart;

This purple's lined with the democracy,—  
Now let him see to it! for a rent within  
Would leave irreparable rags without.

A serious riddle : find such anywhere  
Except in France ; and when 'tis found  
in France,

Be sure to read it rightly. So, I mused  
Up and down, up and down, the terraced  
streets,

The glittering boulevards, the white  
colonnades

Of fair fantastic Paris who wears trees  
Like plumes, as if man made them,  
spire and tower

As if they had grown by nature, tossing up

Her fountains in the sunshine of the  
squares,  
As if in beauty's game she tossed the dice,  
Or blew the silver down-balls of her  
dreams

To sow futurity with seeds of thought  
And count the passage of her festive hours.

The city swims in verdure, beautiful  
As Venice on the waters, the sea-swan.  
What bosky gardens dropped in close-  
walled courts

Like plums in ladies' laps who start and  
laugh :

What miles of streets that run on after  
trees,

Still carrying all the necessary shops,  
Those open caskets with the jewels seen!  
And trade is art, and art's philosophy,  
In Paris. There's a silk for instance,  
there,

As worth an artist's study for the folds,  
As that bronze opposite! nay, the bronze  
has faults,

Art's here too artful,—conscious as a maid  
Wholeans to mark her shadow on the wall  
Until she lose a 'vantage in her step.

Yet Art walks forward, and knows  
where to walk ;

The artists also are idealists,  
Too absolute for nature, logical  
To austerity in the application of  
The special theory,—not a soul content  
To paint a crooked pollard and an ass,  
As the English will because they find  
it so

And like it somehow.—There the old  
Tuileries

Is pulling its high cap down on its eyes,  
Confounded, conscience-stricken, and  
amazed

By the apparition of a new fair face  
In those devouring mirrors. Through  
the grate

Within the gardens, what a heap of babes,  
Swept up like leaves beneath the  
chestnut-trees

From every street and alley of the town,  
By ghosts perhaps that blow too bleak  
this way

A-looking for their heads! dear pretty  
babes,

I wish them luck to have their ball-play out

Before the next change. Here the air  
is thronged

With statues poised upon their columns  
fine

As if to stand a moment were a feat,  
Against that blue! What squares,—  
what breathing-room

For a nation that runs fast,—aye, runs  
against

The dentist's teeth at the corner in pale  
rows,

Which grin at progress in an epigram.

I walked the day out, listening to the  
chink

Of the first Napoleon's dry bones in his  
second grave,

By victories guarded 'neath the golden  
dome

That caps all Paris like a bubble. 'Shall  
These dry bones live,' thought Louis  
Philippe once,

And lived to know. Herein is argument  
For kings and politicians, but still more  
For poets, who bear buckets to the well  
Of ampler draught.

These crowds are very good  
For meditation (when we are very strong),  
Though love of beauty makes us timorous,  
And draws us backward from the coarse  
town-sights

To count the daisies upon dappled fields  
And hear the streams bleat on among  
the hills

In innocent and indolent repose,  
While still with silken elegiac thoughts  
We wind out from us the distracting  
world

And die into the chrysalis of a man,  
And leave the best that may, to come of us,  
In some brown moth. I would be bold  
and bear

To look into the swarthiest face of things,  
For God's sake who has made them.

Six days' work ;  
The last day shutting 'twixt its dawn  
and eve

The whole work bettered of the previous  
five!

Since God collected and resumed in man  
The firmaments, the strata, and the  
lights,

Fish, fowl, and beast, and insect,—all  
their trains

Of various life caught back upon His arm,  
Reorganized, and constituted MAN,  
The microcosm, the adding up of works,—  
Within whose fluttering nostrils, then  
at last

Consummating Himself the Maker sighed,  
As some strong winner at the foot-race  
sighs

Touching the goal.

Humanity is great ;  
And, if I would not rather pore upon  
An ounce of common, ugly, human dust,  
An artisan's palm or a peasant's brow,  
Unsmooth, ignoble, save to me and  
God,

Than track old Nilus to his silver roots,  
Or wait on all the changes of the moon  
Among the mountain-peaks of Thessaly  
(Until her magic crystal round itself  
For many a witch to see in)—set it down  
As weakness,—strength by no means.

How is this

That men of science, osteologists  
And surgeons, beat some poets in respect  
For nature,—count nought common or  
unclean,

Spend raptures upon perfect specimens  
Of indurated veins, distorted joints,  
Or beautiful new cases of curved spine,  
While we, we are shocked at nature's  
falling off,

We dare to shrink back from her warts  
and blains,

We will not, when she sneezes, look at  
her,

Not even to say 'God bless her'? That's  
our wrong ;

For that, she will not trust us often with  
Her larger sense of beauty and desire,  
But tethers us to a lily or a rose  
And bids us diet on the dew inside,  
Left ignorant that the hungry beggar-boy  
(Who stares unseen against our absent  
eyes,

And wonders at the gods that we must be,  
To pass so careless for the oranges!)  
Bears yet a breastful of a fellow-world  
To this world, undisparaged, undespoiled,  
And (while we scorn him for a flower  
or two,

As being, Heaven help us, less poetical)

Contains himself both flowers and firmaments

And surging seas and aspectable stars,  
And all that we would push him out of  
sight

In order to see nearer. Let us pray  
God's grace to keep God's image in repute,  
That so, the poet and philanthropist  
(Even I and Romney) may stand side  
by side,

Because we both stand face to face with  
men,

Contemplating the people in the rough,  
Yet each so follow a vocation, his  
And mine.

I walked on, musing with myself  
On life and art, and whether after all  
A larger metaphysics might not help  
Our physics, a completer poetry  
Adjust our daily life and vulgar wants  
More fully than the special outside plans,  
Phalansteries, material institutes,  
The civil conscriptions and lay monas-  
teries

Preferred by modern thinkers, as they  
thought

The bread of man indeed made all his life,  
And washing seven times in the 'People's  
Baths'

Were sovereign for a people's leprosy,  
Still leaving out the essential prophet's  
word

That comes in power. On which, we  
thunder down,

We prophets, poets,—Virtue's in the  
word!

The maker burnt the darkness up with  
His,

To inaugurate the use of vocal life ;  
And, plant a poet's word even, deep  
enough

In any man's breast, looking presently  
For offshoots, you have done more for  
the man

Than if you dressed him in a broadcloth  
coat

And warmed his Sunday potage at your  
fire.

Yet Romney leaves me . . .

God ! what face is that ?  
O Romney, O Marian !

Walking on the quays  
And pulling thoughts to pieces leisurely,

As if I caught at grasses in a field  
And bit them slow between my absent lips  
And shred them with my hands . .

What face is that ?

What a face, what a look, what a likeness ! Full on mine

The sudden blow of it came down, till all  
My blood swam, my eyes dazzled. Then  
I sprang . .

It was as if a meditative man  
Were dreaming out a summer afternoon  
And watching gnats a-prick upon a pond,  
When something floats up suddenly,  
out there,

Turns over . . a dead face, known once  
alive . .

So old, so new ! it would be dreadful now  
To lose the sight and keep the doubt of  
this :

He plunges—ha ! he has lost it in the  
splash.

I plunged—I tore the crowd up, either  
side,

And rushed on, forward, forward, after  
her.

Her ? whom ?

A woman sauntered slow in front,  
Munching an apple,—she left off amazed  
As if I had snatched it : that's not she,  
at least.

A man walked arm-linked with a lady  
veiled,  
Both heads dropped closer than the need  
of talk :

They started ; he forgot her with his face,  
And she, herself, and clung to him as if  
My look were fatal. Such a stream of folk,  
And all with cares and business of their  
own !

I ran the whole quay down against their  
eyes ;

No Marian ; nowhere Marian. Almost,  
now,

I could call Marian, Marian, with the  
shriek

Of desperate creatures calling for the  
Dead.

Where is she, was she ? was she any-  
where ?

I stood still, breathless, gazing, straining  
out

In every uncertain distance, till at last  
A gentleman abstracted as myself  
Came full against me, then resolved the  
clash

In voluble excuses,—obviously  
Some learned member of the Institute  
Upon his way there, walking, for his  
health,

While meditating on the last ' Discourse ' ;  
Pinching the empty air 'twixt finger and  
thumb,

From which the snuff being ousted by  
that shock

Defiled his snow-white waistcoat duly  
pricked

At the button-hole with honourable red ;  
' Madam, your pardon, '—there he  
swerved from me

A metre, as confounded as he had heard  
That Dumas would be chosen to fill up  
The next chair vacant, by his ' men *en us* .'  
Since when was genius found respect-  
able ?

It passes in its place, indeed,—which  
means

The seventh floor back, or else the  
hospital :

Revolving pistols are ingenious things,  
But prudent men (Academicians are)  
Scarce keep them in the cupboard next  
the prunes.

And so, abandoned to a bitter mirth,  
I loitered to my inn. O world, O world,  
O jurists, rimers, dreamers, what you  
please,

We play a weary game of hide-and-seek !  
We shape a figure of our fantasy,  
Call nothing something, and run after it  
And lose it, lose ourselves too in the  
search,

Till clash against us comes a somebody  
Who also has lost something and is lost,  
Philosopher against philanthropist,  
Academician against poet, man  
Against woman, against the living the  
dead,—

Then ' home, with a bad headache and  
worse jest !

To change the water for my heliotropes  
And yellow roses. Parish as such flowers.  
But England, also. 'Twas a yellow rose,

By that south window of the little house,  
My cousin Romney gathered with his  
hand

On all my birthdays for me, save the  
last;

And then I shook the tree too rough,  
too rough,

For roses to stay after.

Now, my maps.

I must not linger here from Italy

Till the last nightingale is tired of song,

And the last fire-fly dies off in the maize.

My soul's in haste to leap into the sun

And scorch and seethe itself to a finer  
mood,

Which here, in this chill north, is apt  
to stand

Too stiffly in former moulds.

That face persists.

It floats up, it turns over in my mind,

As like to Marian, as one dead is like

The same alive. In very deed a face

And not a fancy, though it vanished so;

The small fair face between the darks  
of hair,

I used to liken, when I saw her first,

To a point of moonlit water down a well:

The low brow, the frank space between  
the eyes,

Which always had the brown pathetic  
look

Of a dumb creature who had been  
beaten once

And never since was easy with the world.

Ah, ah,—now I remember perfectly

Those eyes, to-day,—how overlarge  
they seemed,

As if some patient passionate despair  
(Like a coal dropt and forgot on tapestry,

Which slowly burns a widening circle  
out)

Had burnt them larger, larger. And  
those eyes

To-day, I do remember, saw me too,

As I saw them, with conscious lids  
astrain

In recognition. Now a fantasy,

A simple shade or image of the brain,

Is merely passive, does not retro-act,

Is seen, but sees not.

'Twas a real face,

Perhaps a real Marian.

Which being so,

I ought to write to Romney, 'Marian's  
here;

Be comforted for Marian.'

My pen fell,

My hands struck sharp together, as  
hands do

Which hold at nothing. Can I write to  
*him*

A half-truth? can I keep my own soul  
blind

To the other half, . . . the worse? What  
are our souls,

If still, to run on straight a sober pace

Nor start at every pebble or dead leaf,

They must wear blinkers, ignore facts,  
suppress

Six tenths of the road? Confront the  
truth, my soul!

And oh, as truly as that was Marian's face,

The arms of that same Marian clasped  
a thing

. . . Not hid so well beneath the scanty  
shawl,

I cannot name it now for what it was.

A child. Small business has a castaway

Like Marian with that crown of prosper-  
ous wives

At which the gentlest she grows arrogant

And says, 'my child.' Who finds an  
emerald ring

On a beggar's middle finger and requires

More testimony to convict a thief?

A child's too costly for so mere a wretch;

She filched it somewhere, and it means,  
with her,

Instead of honour, blessing, merely  
shame.

I cannot write to Romney, 'Here she is,  
Here's Marian found! I'll set you on

her track:

I saw her here, in Paris, . . . and her  
child.

She put away your love two years ago,

But, plainly, not to starve. You  
suffered then;

And, now that you've forgot her utterly

As any last year's annual, in whose place

You've planted a thick flowering ever-  
green,

I choose, being kind, to write and tell  
you this

To make you wholly easy—she's not  
dead,  
But only . . . damned.'

Stop there : I go too fast ;  
I'm cruel like the rest,—in haste to take  
The first stir in the arras for a rat,  
And set my barking, biting thoughts  
upon 't.

—A child! what then? Suppose a  
neighbour's sick  
And asked her, 'Marian, carry out my  
child

In this Spring air,'—I punish her for that?  
Or say, the child should hold her round  
the neck

For good child-reasons, that he liked it so  
And would not leave her—she had  
winning ways—

I brand her therefore that she took the  
child?

Not so.

I will not write to Romney Leigh.  
For now he's happy,—and she may  
indeed

Be guilty,—and the knowledge of her  
fault

Would draggle his smooth time. But  
I, whose days

Are not so fine they cannot bear the rain,  
And who moreover having seen her face  
Must see it again, . . . will see it, by my  
hopes

Of one day seeing heaven too. The police  
Shall track her, hound her, ferret their  
own soil ;

We'll dig this Paris to its catacombs  
But certainly we'll find her, have her out,  
And save her, if she will or will not—  
child

Or no child,—if a child, then one to save!

The long weeks passed on without con-  
sequence.

As easy find a footstep on the sand  
The morning after spring-tide, as the  
trace

Of Marian's feet between the incessant  
surfs

Of this live flood. She may have moved  
this way,—

But so the star-fish does, and crosses out  
The dent of her small shoe. The foiled  
police

Renounced me. 'Could they find a girl  
and child,

No other signalment but girl and child :  
No data shown but noticeable eyes  
And hair in masses, low upon the brow,  
As if it were an iron crown and pressed?  
Friends heighten, and suppose they  
specify :

Why, girls with hair and eyes are every-  
where

In Paris ; they had turned me up in vain  
No Marian Erle indeed, but certainly  
Mathildes, Justines, Victoires, . . . or, if  
I sought

The English, Betsies, Saras, by the score.  
They might as well go out into the fields  
To find a speckled bean, that's somehow  
specked,

And somewhere in the pod.'—They left  
me so.

Shall I leave Marian? have I dreamed  
a dream?

—I thank God I have found her! I must  
say

'Thank God,' for finding her, although  
'tis true

I find the world more sad and wicked  
for 't.

But she—

I'll write about her, presently.  
My hand's a-tremble, as I had just caught  
up

My heart to write with, in the place of it.  
At least you'd take these letters to be writ  
At sea, in storm!—wait now . . .

A simple chance  
Did all. I could not sleep last night,  
and, tired

Of turning on my pillow and harder  
thoughts,

Went out at early morning, when the air  
Is delicate with some last starry touch,  
To wander through the Market-place of  
Flowers

(The prettiest haunt in Paris), and make  
sure

At worst that there were roses in the  
world.

So wandering, musing, with the artist's  
eye,

That keeps the shade-side of the thing it  
loves,

Half-absent, whole-observing, while the crowd  
 Of young vivacious and black-braided heads  
 Dipped, quick as finches in a blossomed tree,  
 Among the nosegays, cheapening this and that  
 In such a cheerful twitter of rapid speech,—  
 My heart leapt in me, startled by a voice  
 That slowly, faintly, with long breaths that marked  
 The interval between the wish and word,  
 Inquired in stranger's French, 'Would *that* be much,  
 That branch of flowering mountain-gorse?'—'So much?  
 Too much for me, then!' turning the face round  
 So close upon me that I felt the sigh  
 It turned with.  
 'Marian, Marian!'—face to face—  
 'Marian! I find you. Shall I let you go?'  
 I held her two slight wrists with both my hands;  
 'Ah, Marian, Marian, can I let you go?'  
 —She fluttered from me like a cyclamen,  
 As white, which taken in a sudden wind  
 Beats on against the palisade.—'Let pass,'  
 She said at last. 'I will not,' I replied;  
 'I lost my sister Marian many days,  
 And sought her ever in my walks and prayers,  
 And, now I find her . . . do we throw away  
 The bread we worked and prayed for,—crumble it  
 And drop it, . . . to do even so by thee  
 Whom still I've hungered after more than bread,  
 My sister Marian?—can I hurt thee, dear?  
 Then why distrust me? Never trembleso.  
 Come with me rather where we'll talk and live  
 And none shall vex us. I've a home for you  
 And me and no one else' . . .  
 She shook her head.  
 'A home for you and me and no one else  
 Ill-suits one of us: I prefer to such,

A roof of grass on which a flower might spring,  
 Less costly to me than the cheapest here;  
 And yet I could not, at this hour, afford  
 A like home even. That you offer yours,  
 I thank you. You are good as heaven itself—  
 As good as one I knew before . . . Fare-well.'

I loosed her hands,—'In *his* name, no farewell!'  
 (She stood as if I held her.) 'For his sake,  
 For his sake, Romney's! by the good he meant,  
 Aye, always! by the love he pressed for once,—  
 And by the grief, reproach, abandonment,  
 He took in change' . . .  
 'He Romney! who grieved *him*?  
 Who had the heart for 't? what reproach touched *him*?  
 Be merciful,—speak quickly.'  
 'Therefore come,'  
 I answered with authority.—'I think  
 We dare to speak such things and name such names  
 In the open squares of Paris!'  
 Not a word  
 She said, but in a gentle humbled way  
 (As one who had forgot herself in grief)  
 Turned round and followed closely where I went,  
 As if I led her by a narrow plank  
 Across devouring waters, step by step;  
 And so in silence we walked on a mile.  
 And then she stopped: her face was white as wax.  
 'We go much farther?'  
 'You are ill,' I asked,  
 'Or tired?'  
 She looked the whiter for her smile.  
 'There's one at home,' she said, 'has need of me  
 By this time,—and I must not let him wait.'  
 'Not even,' I asked, 'to hear of Romney Leigh?'

'Not even,' she said, 'to hear of Mister Leigh.'

'In that case,' I resumed, 'I go with you,  
And we can talk the same thing there as here.  
None waits for me: I have my day to spend.'

Her lips moved in a spasm without a sound,—  
But then she spoke. 'It shall be as you please;  
And better so—'tis shorter seen than told:  
And though you will not find me worth your pains,  
*That*, even, may be worth some pains to know  
For one as good as you are.'

Then she led  
The way, and I, as by a narrow plank  
Across devouring waters, followed her,  
Stepping by her footsteps, breathing by her breath,  
And holding her with eyes that would not slip;  
And so, without a word, we walked a mile,  
And so, another mile, without a word.

Until the peopled streets being all dismissed,  
House-rows and groups all scattered like a flock,  
The market-gardens thickened, and the long  
White walls beyond, like spiders' outside threads,  
Stretched, feeling blindly toward the country-fields  
Through half-built habitations and half-dug  
Foundations,—intervals of trenchant chalk  
That bit betwixt the grassy uneven turfs  
Where goats (vine-tendrils trailing from their mouths)  
Stood perched on edges of the cellarage  
Which should be, staring as about to leap  
To find their coming Bacchus. All the place

Seemed less a cultivation than a waste.  
Men work here, only,—scarce begin to live:

All's sad, the country struggling with the town,  
Like an untamed hawk upon a strong man's fist,  
That beats its wings and tries to get away.  
And cannot choose be satisfied so soon  
To hop through court-yards with its right foot tied,  
The vintage plains and pastoral hills in sight.

We stopped beside a house too high and slim  
To stand there by itself, but waiting till  
Five others, two on this side, three on that,  
Should grow up from the sullen second floor

They pause at now, to build it to a row.  
The upper windows partly were unglazed  
Meantime,—a meagre, unripe house: a line

Of rigid poplars elbowed it behind,  
And, just in front, beyond the lime and bricks

That wronged the grass between it and the road,

A great acacia with its slender trunk  
And overpoise of multitudinous leaves  
(In which a hundred fields might spill their dew

And intense verdure, yet find room enough)

Stood reconciling all the place with green.

I followed up the stair upon her step.  
She hurried upward, shot across a face,  
A woman's, on the landing,—'How now, now!

Is no one to have holidays but you?  
You said an hour, and stay three hours,

I think,  
And Julie waiting for your betters here?  
Why if he had waked he might have waked, for me.'

—Just murmuring an excusing word she passed

And shut the rest out with the chamber-door,  
Myself shut in beside her.

'Twas a room  
Scarce larger than a grave, and near as  
bare;

Two stools, a pallet-bed; I saw the room:  
A mouse could find no sort of shelter in 't,  
Much less a greater secret; curtainless,—  
The window fixed you with its torturing  
eye,

Defying you to take a step apart  
If peradventure you would hide a thing.  
I saw the whole room, I and Marian there  
Alone.

Alone? She threw her bonnet off,  
Then, sighing as 'twere sighing the last  
time,

Approached the bed, and drew a shawl  
away:

You could not peel a fruit you fear to  
bruise

More calmly and more carefully than so,—  
Nor would you find within, a rosier flushed  
Pomegranate—

There he lay upon his back,  
The yearling creature, warm and moist  
with life

To the bottom of his dimples,—to the ends  
Of the lovely tumbled curls about his face;  
For since he had been covered over-much  
To keep him from the light-glare, both  
his cheeks

Were hot and scarlet as the first live rose  
The shepherd's heart-blood ebb'd away  
into

The faster for his love. And love was here  
As instant; in the pretty baby-mouth,  
Shut close as if for dreaming that it  
sucked,

The little naked feet, drawn up the way  
Of nestled birdlings; everything so soft  
And tender,—to the tiny holdfast hands,  
Which, closing on a finger into sleep,  
Had kept the mould of 't.

While we stood there dumb,  
For oh, that it should take such innocence  
To prove just guilt, I thought, and stood  
there dumb,—

The light upon his eyelids pricked them  
wide,

And, staring out at us with all their blue,  
As half-perplexed between the angelhood  
He had been away to visit in his sleep,  
And our most mortal presence, gradually  
He saw his mother's face, accepting it

In change for heaven itself with such a  
smile

As might have well been learnt there,—  
never moved,

But smiled on, in a drowse of ecstasy,  
So happy (half with her and half with  
heaven)

He could not have the trouble to bestirred,  
But smiled and lay there. Like a rose,  
I said?

As red and still indeed as any rose,  
That blows in all the silence of its leaves,  
Content in blowing to fulfil its life.

She leaned above him (drinking him as  
wine)

In that extremity of love, 'twill pass  
For agony or rapture, seeing that love  
Includes the whole of nature, rounding it  
To love . . . no more,—since more can  
never be

Than just love. Self-forgot, cast out of  
self,

And drowning in the transport of the  
sight,

Her whole pale passionate face, mouth,  
forehead, eyes,

One gaze, she stood: then, slowly as he  
smiled

She smiled too, slowly, smiling unaware,  
And drawing from his countenance to  
hers

A fainter red, as if she watched a flame  
And stood in it a-glow. 'How beautiful,'  
Said she.

I answered, trying to be cold.  
(Must sin have compensations, was my  
thought,

As if it were a holy thing like grief?

And is a woman to be fooled aside  
From putting vice down, with that  
woman's toy

A baby?—'Aye! the child is well  
enough,'

I answered. 'If his mother's palms are  
clean

They need be glad of course in clasping  
such;

But if not, I would rather lay my hand,  
Were I she, on God's brazen altar-bars  
Red-hot with burning sacrificial lambs,  
Than touch the sacred curls of such a  
child.'

She plunged her fingers in his clustering locks,  
 As one who would not be afraid of fire;  
 And then with indrawn steady utterance said,  
 'My lamb, my lamb! although, through such as thou,  
 The most unclean got courage and approach  
 To God, once,—now they cannot, even with men,  
 Find grace enough for pity and gentle words.'

'My Marian,' I made answer, grave and sad,  
 'The priest who stole a lamb to offer him,  
 Was still a thief. And if a woman steals  
 (Through God's own barrier-hedges of true love,  
 Which fence out licence in securing love)  
 A child like this, that smiles so in her face,  
 She is no mother but a kidnapper,  
 And he's a dismal orphan, not a son,  
 Whom all her kisses cannot feed so full  
 He will not miss hereafter a pure home  
 To live in, a pure heart to lean against,  
 A pure good mother's name and memory  
 To hope by, when the world grows thick and bad  
 And he feels out for virtue.'

'Oh,' she smiled  
 With bitter patience, 'the child takes his chance;  
 Not much worse off in being fatherless  
 Than I was, fathered. He will say, belike,  
 His mother was the saddest creature born;  
 He'll say his mother lived so contrary  
 To joy, that even the kindest, seeing her,  
 Grew sometimes almost cruel: he'll not say  
 She flew contrarious in the face of God  
 With bat-wings of her vices. Stole my child,—  
 My flower of earth, my only flower on earth,  
 My sweet, my beauty!' . . . Up she snatched the child,  
 And, breaking on him in a storm of tears,  
 Drew out her long sobs from their shivering roots,  
 Until he took it for a game, and stretched

His feet and flapped his eager arms like wings  
 And crowed and gurgled through his infant laugh:  
 'Mine, mine,' she said. 'I have as sure a right  
 As any glad proud mother in the world,  
 Whose sets her darling down to cut his teeth  
 Upon her church-ring. If she talks of law.  
 I talk of law! I claim my mother-dues  
 By law,—the law which now is paramount,—  
 The common law, by which the poor and weak  
 Are trodden underfoot by vicious men,  
 And loathed for ever after by the good.  
 Let pass! I did not filch,—I found the child.'

'You found him, Marian?'

'Aye, I found him where  
 I found my curse,—in the gutter, with my shame!  
 What have you, any of you, to say to that,  
 Who all are happy, and sit safe and high,  
 And never spoke before to arraign my right  
 To grief itself? What, what, . . . being beaten down  
 By hoofs of maddened oxen into a ditch,  
 Half-dead, whole mangled, when a girl at last  
 Breathes, sees . . . and finds there, bedded in her flesh  
 Because of the extremity of the shock,  
 Some coin of price! . . . and when a good man comes  
 (That's God! the best men are not quite as good)  
 And says, "I dropped the coin there: take it you,  
 And keep it,—it shall pay you for the loss,"—  
 You all put up your finger—"See the thief!  
 Observe what precious thing she has come to filch.  
 How bad those girls are!" Oh, my flower, my pet,  
 I dare forget I have you in my arms  
 And fly off to be angry with the world,  
 And fright you, hurt you with my tempers, till

You double up your lip? Why, that indeed  
Is bad: a naughty mother!

'You mistake,'  
I interrupted; 'if I loved you not,  
I should not, Marian, certainly be here.'

'Alas,' she said, 'you are so very good;  
And yet I wish indeed you had never come  
To make me sob until I vex the child.  
It is not wholesome for these pleasure-  
plats

To be so early watered by our brine.  
And then, who knows? he may not like  
me now

As well, perhaps, as ere he saw me fret,—  
One's ugly fretting! he has eyes the  
same

As angels, but he cannot see as deep,  
And so I've kept for ever in his sight  
A sort of smile to please him,—as you  
place

A green thing from the garden in a cup,  
To make believe it grows there. Look,  
my sweet,

My cowslip-ball! we've done with that  
cross face,

And here 's the face come back you used  
to like.

Ah, ah! he laughs! he likes me. Ah,  
Miss Leigh,

You're great and pure; but were you  
purer still,—

As if you had walked, we'll say, no  
otherwhere

Than up and down the new Jerusalem,  
And held your trailing lute string up  
yourself

From brushing the twelve stones, for fear  
of some

Small speck as little as a needle-prick,  
White stitched on white,—the child  
would keep to *me*,

Would choose his poor lost Marian, like  
me best,

And, though you stretched your arms,  
cry back and cling,

As we do when God says it 's time to die  
And bids us go up higher. Leave us, then;  
We two are happy. Does *he* push me off?  
He 's satisfied with me, as I with him.'

'So soft to one, so hard to others! Nay,'  
I cried, more angry that she melted me,

'We make henceforth a cushion of our  
faults

To sit and practise easy virtues on?  
I thought a child was given to sanctify  
A woman,—set her in the sight of all  
The clear-eyed heavens, a chosen  
minister

To do their business and lead spirits up  
The difficult blue heights. A woman  
lives,

Not bettered, quickened toward the truth  
and good

Through being a mother? . . then she 's  
none! although

She damps her baby's cheeks by kissing  
them,

As we kill roses.'

'Kill! O Christ,' she said,  
And turned her wild sad face from side  
to side

With most despairing wonder in it,  
'What,

What have you in your souls against me  
then,

All of you? am I wicked, do you think?  
God knows me, trusts me with the child;  
but you,

You think me really wicked?'

'Complaisant,'  
I answered softly, 'to a wrong you've  
done,

Because of certain profits,—which is  
wrong

Beyond the first wrong, Marian. When  
you left

The pure place and the noble heart, to  
take

The hand of a seducer' . .

'Whom? whose hand?  
I took the hand of' . .

Springing up erect  
And lifting up the child at full arm's  
length,

As if to bear him like an oriflamme  
Unconquerable to armies of reproach,—

'By *him*,' she said, 'my child's head  
and its curls,

By these blue eyes no woman born could  
dare

A perjury on, I make my mother's oath,  
That if I left that Heart, to lighten it,

The blood of mine was still, except for  
grief!

No cleaner maid than I was, took a step  
To a sadder end,—no matron-mother  
now

Looks backward to her early maidenhood  
Through chaster pulses. I speak steadily;  
And if I lie so, . . . if, being fouled in will  
And paltered with in soul by devil's lust,  
I dared to bid this angel take my part, . . .  
Would God sit quiet, let us think, in  
heaven,

Nor strike me dumb with thunder! Yet  
I speak:

He clears me therefore. What,  
"seduced" 's your word?

Do wolves seduce a wandering fawn in  
France?

Do eagles, who have pinched a lamb  
with claws,

Seduce it into carrion? So with me.

I was not ever, as you say, seduced,

But simply, murdered.'

There she paused, and sighed,  
With such a sigh as drops from agony  
To exhaustion,—sighing while she let  
the babe

Slide down upon her bosom from her  
arms,

And all her face's light fell after him

Like a torch quenched in falling. Down  
she sank,

And sate upon the bedside with the child.

But I, convicted, broken utterly,  
With woman's passion clung about her  
waist

And kissed her hair and eyes,—'I have  
been wrong,

Sweet Marian' . . . (weeping in a tender  
rage)

'Sweet holy Marian! And now, Marian,  
now,

I'll use your oath although my lips are  
hard,

And by the child, my Marian, by the child,  
I swear his mother shall be innocent  
Before my conscience, as in the open  
Book

Of Him who reads for judgement. Innocent,

My sister! let the night be ne'er so dark  
The moon is surely somewhere in the  
sky;

So surely is your whiteness to be found

Through all dark facts. But pardon,  
pardon me,  
And smile a little; Marian,—for the child,  
If not for me, my sister.'

The poor lip  
Just motioned for the smile and let it go:  
And then, with scarce a stirring of the  
mouth,

As if a statue spoke that could not  
breathe,

But spoke on calm between its marble  
lips,—

'I'm glad, I'm very glad you clear me so.  
I should be sorry that you set me down  
With harlots, or with even a better name  
Which misbecomes his mother. For the  
rest,

I am not on a level with your love,

Nor ever was, you know,—but now am  
worse,

Because that world of yours has dealt  
with me

As when the hard sea bites and chews  
a stone

And changes the first form of it. I've  
marked

A shore of pebbles bitten to one shape

From all the various life of madrepores;  
And so, that little stone, called Marian

Erle,

Picked up and dropped by you and  
another friend,

Was ground and tortured by the incessant  
sea

And bruised from what she was,—  
changed! death's a change,

And she, I said, was murdered; Marian's  
dead.

What can you do with people when they  
are dead,

But, if you are pious, sing a hymn and go,  
Or, if you are tender, heave a sigh and go,

But go by all means,—and permit the  
grass

To keep its green feud up 'twixt them  
and you?

Then leave me,—let me rest. I'm dead,  
I say,

And if, to save the child from death as  
well,

The mother in me has survived the rest,  
Why, that's God's miracle you must  
not tax,

I'm not less dead for that : I'm nothing more  
 But just a mother. Only for the child  
 I'm warm, and cold, and hungry, and afraid,  
 And smell the flowers a little and see the sun,  
 And speak still, and am silent,—just for him !  
 I pray you therefore to mistake me not  
 And treat me haply as I were alive ;  
 For though you ran a pin into my soul,  
 I think it would not hurt nor trouble me.  
 Here 's proof, dear lady,—in the market-place  
 But now, you promised me to say a word  
 About . . a friend, who once, long years ago,  
 Took God's place toward me, when He leans and loves  
 And does not thunder, . . whom at last I left,  
 As all of us leave God. You thought perhaps  
 I seemed to care for hearing of that friend ?  
 Now, judge me ! we have sate here half an hour  
 And talked together of the child and me,  
 And I not asked as much as, "What's the thing  
 You had to tell me of the friend . . the friend ?"  
 He 's sad, I think you said,—he 's sick perhaps ?  
 'Tis nought to Marian if he 's sad or sick.  
 Another would have crawled beside your foot  
 And prayed your words out. Why, a beast, a dog,  
 A starved cat, if he had fed it once with milk,  
 Would show less hardness. But I'm dead, you see,  
 And that explains it.'  
 Poor, poor thing, she spoke  
 And shook her head, as white and calm as frost  
 On days too cold for raining any more,  
 But still with such a face, so much alive,  
 I could not choose but take it on my arm  
 And stroke the placid patience of its cheeks,—

Then told my story out, of Romney Leigh,  
 How, having lost her, sought her, missed her still,  
 He, broken-hearted for himself and her,  
 Had drawn the curtains of the world awhile  
 As if he had done with morning.  
 There I stopped,  
 For when she gasped, and pressed me with her eyes,  
 'And now . . how is it with him ? tell me now,'  
 I felt the shame of compensated grief,  
 And chose my words with scruple—slowly stepped  
 Upon the slippery stones set here and there  
 Across the sliding water. 'Certainly,  
 As evening empties morning into night,  
 Another morning takes the evening up  
 With healthful, providential interchange;  
 And, though he thought still of her,'—  
 'Yes, she knew,  
 She understood: she had supposed indeed  
 That, as one stops a hole upon a flute,  
 At which a new note comes and shapes the tune,  
 Excluding her would bring a worthier in,  
 And, long ere this, that Lady Waldemar  
 He loved so' . .  
 'Loved,' I started,—'loved her so !  
 Now tell me' . .  
 'I will tell you,' she replied:  
 'But, since we're taking oaths, you'll promise first  
 That he in England, he, shall never learn  
 In what a dreadful trap his creature here,  
 Round whose unworthy neck he had meant to tie  
 The honourable ribbon of his name,  
 Fell unaware and came to butchery :  
 Because,—I know him,—as he takes to heart  
 The grief of every stranger, he's not like  
 To banish mine as far as I should choose  
 In wishing him most happy. Now he leaves  
 To think of me, perverse, who went my way,  
 Unkind, and left him,—but if once he knew . .  
 Ah, then, the sharp nail of my cruel wrong

Would fasten me for ever in his sight,  
Like some poor curious bird, through  
each spread wing  
Nailed high up over a fierce hunter's fire,  
To spoil the dinner of all tenderer folk  
Come in by chance. Nay, since your  
Marian's dead,  
You shall not hang her up, but dig a hole  
And bury her in silence! ring no bells.'

I answered gaily, though my whole  
voice wept,  
'We'll ring the joy-bells, not the  
funeral-bells,  
Because we have her back, dead or alive.'

She never answered that, but shook her  
head;

Then low and calm, as one who, safe in  
heaven,  
Shall tell a story of his lower life,  
Unmoved by shame or anger,—so she  
spoke.

She told me she had loved upon her knees,  
As others pray, more perfectly absorbed  
In the act and inspiration. She felt his  
For just his uses, not her own at all,  
His stool, to sit on or put up his foot,  
His cup, to fill with wine or vinegar,  
Whichever drink might please him at  
the chance

For that should please her always: let  
him write

His name upon her. . . it seemed natural;  
It was most precious, standing on his  
shelf,

To wait until he chose to lift his hand.  
Well, well,—I saw her then, and must  
have seen

How bright her life went floating on  
her love,

Like wicks the housewives send afloat  
on oil

Which feeds them to a flame that lasts  
the night.

To do good seemed so much his business,  
That, having done it, she was fain to think,  
Must fill up his capacity for joy.

At first she never mooted with herself  
If he was happy, since he made her so,  
Or if he loved her, being so much beloved.  
Who thinks of asking if the sun is light,

Observing that it lightens? who's so bold,  
To question God of His felicity!

Still less. And thus she took for granted  
first

What first of all she should have put to  
proof,

And sinned against him so, but only so.  
'What could you hope,' she said, 'of  
such as she!

You take a kid you like, and turn it out  
In some fair garden: though the creature's  
fond

And gentle, it will leap upon the beds  
And break your tulips, bite your tender  
trees;

The wonder would be if such innocence  
Spoiled less: a garden is no place for kids.'

And, by degrees, when he who had  
chosen her

Brought in his courteous and benignant  
friends

To spend their goodness on her, which  
she took

So very gladly, as a part of his,—  
By slow degrees it broke on her slow sense  
That she too in that Eden of delight  
Was out of place, and, like the silly kid,  
Still did most mischief where she meant  
most love.

A thought enough to make a woman mad  
(No beast in this but she may well go mad),  
That saying 'I am thine to love and use'  
May blow the plague in her protesting  
breath

To the very man for whom she claims  
to die,—

That, clinging round his neck, she pulls  
him down

And drowns him,—and that, lavishing  
her soul,

She hales perdition on him. 'So, being  
'mad,'

Said Marian. . .  
'Ah—who stirred such  
thoughts, you ask?

Whose fault it was, that she should have  
such thoughts?

None's fault, none's fault. The light  
comes, and we see:

But if it were not truly for our eyes,  
There would be nothing seen, for all the  
light.

And so with Marian: if she saw at last,  
The sense was in her,—Lady Waldemar  
Had spoken all in vain else.

‘O my heart,  
O prophet in my heart,’ I cried aloud,  
‘Then Lady Waldemar spoke!’

‘Did she speak,’  
Mused Marian softly, ‘or did she only  
sign?

Or did she put a word into her face  
And look, and so impress you with the  
word?

Or leave it in the foldings of her gown,  
Like rosemary smells a movement will  
shake out

When no one’s conscious? who shall  
say, or guess?

One thing alone was certain—from the  
day

The gracious lady paid a visit first,  
She, Marian, saw things different,—felt  
distrust

Or all that sheltering roof of circumstance  
Her hopes were building into with clay  
nests:

Her heart was restless, pacing up and  
down

And fluttering, like dumb creatures before  
storms,

Not knowing wherefore she was ill at  
ease.

‘And still the lady came,’ said Marian  
Erle,

‘Much oftener than *he* knew it, Mister  
Leigh.

She bade me never tell him she had come,  
She liked to love me better than *he* knew,  
So very kind was Lady Waldemar:

And every time she brought with her  
more light,

And every light made sorrow clearer . .  
Well,

Ah, well! we cannot give her blame for  
that;

‘Twould be the same thing if an angel  
came,

Whose right should prove our wrong.  
And every time

The lady came, she looked more beautiful  
And spoke more like a flute among green  
trees,

Until at last, as one, whose heart being sad

On hearing lovely music, suddenly  
Dissolves in weeping, I brake out in tears  
Before her, asked her counsel,—‘Had  
I erred

In being too happy! would she set me  
straight?

For she, being wise and good and born  
above

The flats I had never climbed from, could  
perceive

If such as I, might grow upon the hills;  
And whether such poor herb sufficed to  
grow,

For Romney Leigh to break his fast  
upon ‘t,—

Or would he pine on such, or haply  
starve?’

She wrapt me in her generous arms at  
once,

And let me dream a moment how it feels  
To have a real mother, like some girls:  
But when I looked, her face was

younger . . aye,

Youth’s too bright not to be a little hard,  
And beauty keeps itself still uppermost,  
That’s true!—Though Lady Waldemar  
was kind

She hurt me, hurt, as if the morning-sun  
Should smite us on the eyelids when we

sleep,  
And wake us up with headache. Aye,

and soon  
Was light enough to make my heart  
ache too:

She told me truths I asked for,—‘twas  
my fault,—

“That Romney could not love me, if he  
would,

As men call loving: there are bloods  
that flow

Together like some rivers and not mix,  
Through contraries of nature. He indeed

Was set to wed me, to espouse my class,  
Act out a rash opinion,—and, once wed,

So just a man and gentle could not choose  
But make my life as smooth as marriage-

ring,

Bespeak me mildly, keep me a cheerful  
house,

With servants, brooches, all the flowers  
I liked,

And pretty dresses, silk the whole year  
round” . .

At which I stopped her,—“This for me.  
And now

For *him*.”—She hesitated,—truth grew  
hard;

She owned, “’Twas plain a man like  
Romney Leigh

Required a wife more level to himself.

If day by day he had to bend his height  
To pick up sympathies, opinions,  
thoughts,

And interchange the common talk of life  
Which helps a man to live as well as talk,  
His days were heavily taxed. Who buys  
a staff

To fit the hand, that reaches but the knee?  
He’d feel it bitter to be forced to miss  
The perfect joy of married suited pairs,  
Who, bursting through the separating  
hedge

Of personal dues with that sweet eglan-  
tine

Of equal love, keep saying, ‘So *we* think,  
It strikes *us*,—that’s *our* fancy.’—When  
I asked

If earnest will, devoted love, employed  
In youth like mine, would fail to raise  
me up

As two strong arms will always raise a  
child

To a fruit hung overhead, she sighed and  
sighed . .

“That could not be,” she feared. “You  
take a pink,

You dig about its roots and water it  
And so improve it to a garden-pink,  
But will not change it to a heliotrope,  
The kind remains. And then, the harder  
truth—

This Romney Leigh, so rash to leap a pale,  
So bold for conscience, quick for martyr-  
dom,

Would suffer steadily and never flinch,  
But suffer surely and keenly, when his  
class

Turned shoulder on him for a shameful  
match,

And set him up as ninepin in their talk  
To bowl him down with jestings.”—

There, she paused;  
And when I used the pause in doubting  
that

We wronged him after all in what we  
feared—

“Suppose such things could never touch  
him more

In his high conscience (if the things  
should be)

Than, when the queen sits in an upper  
room,

The horses in the street can spatter  
her!”—

A moment, hope came,—but the lady  
closed

That door and nicked the lock and shut  
it out,

Observing wisely that, “the tender heart  
Which made him over-soft to a lower  
class,

Would scarcely fail to make him sensitive  
To a higher,—how they thought and  
what they felt.”

‘Alas, alas,’ said Marian, rocking slow  
The pretty baby who was near asleep,  
The eyelids creeping over the blue  
balls,—

‘She made it clear, too clear—I saw the  
whole!

And yet who knows if I had seen my way  
Straight out of it by looking, though  
’twas clear,

Unless the generous lady, ’ware of this,  
Had set her own house all afire for me  
To light me forwards! Leaning on my  
face

Her heavy agate eyes which crushed  
my will,

She told me tenderly (as when men  
come

To a bedside to tell people they must die).

“She knew of knowledge,—aye, of  
knowledge knew,

That Romney Leigh had loved *her*  
formerly.

And *she* loved *him*, she might say, now  
the chance

Was past,—but that, of course, he never  
guessed,—

For something came between them,  
something thin

As a cobweb, catching every fly of doubt  
To hold it buzzing at the window-pane

And help to dim the daylight. Ah,  
man’s pride

Or woman’s—which is greatest? most  
averse

To brushing cobwebs? Well, but she  
and he  
Remained fast friends; it seemed not  
more than so,  
Because he had bound his hands and  
could not stir.  
An honourable man, if somewhat rash;  
And she, not even for Romney, would  
she spill  
A blot . . . as little even as a tear . . .  
Upon his marriage-contract,—not to gain  
A better joy for two than came by that:  
For, though I stood between her heart  
and heaven,  
She loved me wholly.”

Did I laugh or curse?  
I think I sate there silent, hearing all,  
Aye, hearing double,—Marian’s tale, at  
once,  
And Romney’s marriage-vow, ‘*I’ll keep  
to thee,*’  
Which means that woman-serpent. Is  
it time  
For church now?

‘Lady Waldemar spoke more,’  
Continued Marian, ‘but, as when a soul  
Will pass out through the sweetness of  
a song

Beyond it, voyaging the uphill road,  
Even so mine wandered from the things  
I heard

To those I suffered. It was afterward  
I shaped the resolution to the act.  
For many hours we talked. What need  
to talk?

The fate was clear and close; it touched  
my eyes;

But still the generous lady tried to keep  
The case afloat, and would not let it go,  
And argued, struggled upon Marian’s  
side,

Which was not Romney’s! though she  
little knew

What ugly monster would take up the  
end,—

What griping death within the drowning  
death

Was ready to complete my sum of death.’

I thought,—Perhaps he’s sliding now  
the ring

Upon that woman’s finger . . .

She went on :

‘The lady, failing to prevail her way,  
Up-gathered my torn wishes from the  
ground

And pieced them with her strong  
benevolence;

And, as I thought I could breathe freer  
air

Away from England, going without pause,  
Without farewell, just breaking with a  
jerk

The blossomed offshoot from my thorny  
life,—

She promised kindly to provide the  
means,

With instant passage to the colonies

And full protection,—“would commit  
me straight

To one who once had been her waiting-  
maid

And had the customs of the world, intent  
On changing England for Australia  
Herself, to carry out her fortune so.”

For which I thanked the Lady Waldemar,  
As men upon their death-beds thank  
last friends

Who lay the pillow straight: it is not  
much,

And yet ’tis all of which they are capable,  
This lying smoothly in a bed to die.

And so, ’twas fixed;—and so, from day  
to day,

The woman named came in to visit me.’

Just then the girl stopped speaking,—  
sate erect,

And stared at me as if I had been a ghost  
(Perhaps I looked as white as any ghost)  
With large-eyed horror. ‘Does God  
make,’ she said,

‘All sorts of creatures really, do you  
think?

Or is it that the Devil slayers them  
So excellently, that we come to doubt

Who’s stronger, He who makes, or he  
who mars?

I never liked the woman’s face or voice  
Or ways: it made me blush to look at her;

It made me tremble if she touched my  
hand;

And when she spoke a fondling word  
I shrank

As if one hated me who had power to  
hurt;

And, every time she came, my veins ran cold

As somebody were walking on my grave.  
At last I spoke to Lady Waldemar:

"Could such an one be good to trust?"  
I asked.

Whereat the lady stroked my cheek and laughed

Her silver-laugh (one must be born to laugh,

To put such music in it),—"Foolish girl,  
Your scattered wits are gathering wool

beyond  
The sheep-walk reaches!—leave the thing to me."

And therefore, half in trust, and half in scorn

That I had heart still for another fear  
In such a safe despair, I left the thing.

'The rest is short. I was obedient:  
I wrote my letter which delivered *him*

From Marian to his own prosperities,  
And followed that bad guide. The

lady!—hush,  
I never blame the lady. Ladies who

Sit high, however willing to look down,  
Will scarce see lower than their dainty

feet;  
And Lady Waldemar saw less than I,

With what a Devil's daughter I went forth  
Along the swine's road, down the precipice,

In such a curl of hell-foam caught and choked,

No shriek of soul in anguish could pierce through

To fetch some help. They say there's help in heaven

For all such cries. But if one cries from hell . .

What then?—the heavens are deaf upon that side.

'A woman . . hear me, let me make it plain, . .

A woman . . not a monster . . both her breasts

Made right to suckle babes . . she took me off

A woman also, young and ignorant  
And heavy with my grief, my two poor eyes

Near washed away with weeping, till the trees,

The blessed unaccustomed trees and fields  
Ran either side the train like stranger dogs

Unworthy of any notice,—took me off  
So dull, so blind, so only half alive,

Not seeing by what road, nor by what ship,

Nor toward what place, nor to what end of all.

Men carry a corpse thus,—past the doorway, past

The garden-gate, the children's playground, up

The green lane,—then they leave it in the pit,

To sleep and find corruption, cheek to cheek

With him who stinks since Friday.  
'But suppose;

To go down with one's soul into the grave,  
To go down half dead, half alive, I say,

And wake up with corruption, . . cheek to cheek

With him who stinks since Friday!  
There it is,

And that's the horror of 't, Miss Leigh.  
'You feel?

You understand?—no, do not look at me,  
But understand. The blank, blind,

weary way,  
Which led, where'er it led, away at

least;  
The shifted ship, to Sydney or to France,

Still bound, wherever else, to another land;

The swooning sickness on the dismal sea,  
The foreign shore, the shameful house,

the night,  
The feeble blood, the heavy-headed

grief, . .  
No need to bring their damnable drugged

cup,  
And yet they brought it. Hell's so

prodigal  
Of devil's gifts, hunts liberally in packs,

Will kill no poor small creature of the wilds

But fifty red wide throats must smoke at it,

As his at me . . when waking up at last . .  
I told you that I waked up in the grave.



And chink to her naughty uses undis-  
turbed,

Sheserved me (after all it was not strange,  
'Twas only what my mother would have  
done)

A motherly, right damnable good turn.

'Well, after. There are nettles every-  
where,

But smooth green grasses are more  
common still;

The blue of heaven is larger than the  
cloud;

A miller's wife at Clichy took me in  
And spent her pity on me,—made me calm  
And merely very reasonably sad.

She found me a servant's place in Paris,  
where

I tried to take the cast-off life again,  
And stood as quiet as a beaten ass  
Who, having fallen through overloads,  
stands up

To let them charge him with another  
pack.

'A few months, so. My mistress, young  
and light,

Was easy with me, less for kindness than  
Because she led, herself, an easy time  
Betwixt her lover and her looking-glass,  
Scarce knowing which way she was  
praised the most.

She felt so pretty and so pleased all day  
She could not take the trouble to be cross,  
But sometimes, as I stooped to tie her  
shoe,

Would tap me softly with her slender foot  
Still restless with the last night's dancing  
in 't.

And say, "Fie, pale-face! are you English  
girls

All grave and silent? mass-book still,  
and Lent?

And first-communion pallor on your  
cheeks,

Worn past the time for 't? little fool, be  
gay!"

At which she vanished like a fairy,  
through

A gap of silver laughter.

'Come an hour  
When all went otherwise. She did not  
speak,

But clenched her brows, and clipped me  
with her eyes

As if a viper with a pair of tongs,  
Too far for any touch, yet near enough  
To view the writhing creature,—then at  
last,

"Stand still there, in the holy Virgin's  
name,

Thou Marian; thou'rt no reputable girl,  
Although sufficient dull for twenty saints!  
I think thou mock'st me and my house,"

she said;  
"Confess thou'lt be a mother in a month,  
Thou mask of saintship."

'Could I answer her?  
The light broke in so. It meant *that*  
then, *that*?

I had not thought of that, in all my  
thoughts,  
Through all the cold, numb aching of  
my brow,

Through all the heaving of impatient life  
Which threw me on death at intervals,—  
through all

The upbreak of the fountains of my heart  
The rains had swelled too large: it  
could mean *that*!

Did God make mothers out of victims,  
then,  
And set such pure amens to hideous  
deeds?

Why not? He overblows an ugly grave  
With violets which blossom in the spring.  
And I could be a mother in a month?  
I hope it was not wicked to be glad.  
I lifted up my voice and wept, and  
laughed,

To heaven, not her, until it tore my throat.  
"Confess, confess!"—what was there  
to confess,

Except man's cruelty, except my wrong?  
Except this anguish, or this ecstasy?  
This shame or glory? The light woman  
there

Was small to take it in: an acorn-cup  
Would take the sea in sooner.

"Good," she cried;  
"Unmarried and a mother, and she  
laughs!

These unchaste girls are always impu-  
dent.

Get out, intriguer! leave my house and  
trot.

I wonder you should look me in the face,  
With such a filthy secret."

"Then I rolled  
My scanty bundle up and went my way,  
Washed white with weeping, shuddering  
head and foot  
With blind hysteric passion, staggering  
forth

Beyond those doors. 'Twas natural of  
course

She should not ask me where I meant  
to sleep;

I might sleep well beneath the heavy  
Seine,

Like others of my sort; the bed was laid  
For us. But any woman, womanly,  
Had thought of him who should be in  
a month,

Thesinless babe that should be in a month,  
And if by chance he might be warmer  
housed

Than underneath such dreary dripping  
eaves.'

I broke on Marian there. 'Yet she  
herself,

A wife, I think, had scandals of her own,  
A lover not her husband.'

'Aye,' she said,  
'But gold and meal are measured other-  
wise;

I learnt so much at school,' said Marian  
Erle.

'O crooked world,' I cried, 'ridiculous  
If not so lamentable! 'Tis the way  
With these light women of a thrifty vice,  
My Marian,—always hard upon the rent  
In any sister's virtue! while they keep  
Their own so darned and patched with  
perfidy,

That, though a rag itself, it looks as well  
Across a street, in balcony or coach,  
As any perfect stuff might. For my part,  
I'd rather take the wind-side of the stews  
Than touch such women with my finger-  
end!

They top the poor street-walker by  
their lie

And look the better for being so much  
worse:

The devil's most devilish when respect-  
able.

But you, dear, and your story.'

'All the rest  
Is here,' she said, and signed upon the  
child.

'I found a mistress-sempstress who was  
kind

And let me sew in peace among her girls,  
And what was better than to draw the  
threads

All day and half the night for him and him!  
And so I lived for him, and so he lives,

And so I know, by this time, God lives  
too.'

She smiled beyond the sun and ended so,  
And all my soul rose up to take her part  
Against the world's successes, virtues,  
fames.

'Come with me, sweetest sister,' I re-  
turned,

'And sit within my house and do me good  
From henceforth, thou and thine! ye  
are my own

From henceforth. I am lonely in the  
world,

And thou art lonely, and the child is half  
An orphan. Come,—and henceforth  
thou and I

Being still together will not miss a friend,  
Nor he a father, since two mothers shall  
Make that up to him. I am journeying

south,  
And in my Tuscan home I'll find a niche  
And set thee there, my saint, the child  
and thee,

And burn the lights of love before thy face,  
And ever at thy sweet look cross myself  
From mixing with the world's prosperi-  
ties;

That so, in gravity and holy calm,  
We two may live on toward the truer  
life.'

She looked me in the face and answered  
not,

Nor signed she was unworthy, nor gave  
thanks,

But took the sleeping child and held it out  
To meet my kiss, as if requiting me  
And trusting me at once. And thus, at  
once,

I carried him and her to where I live;  
She's there now, in the little room, asleep,

I hear the soft child-breathing through  
the door,  
And all three of us, at to-morrow's break,  
Pass onward, homeward, to our Italy.  
Oh, Romney Leigh, I have your debts  
to pay,  
And I'll be just and pay them.

But yourself!  
To pay your debts is scarcely difficult,  
To buy your life is nearly impossible,  
Being sold away to Lamia. My head  
aches,

I cannot see my road along this dark;  
Nor can I creep and grope, as fits the dark,  
For these foot-catching robes of woman-  
hood:

A man might walk a little . . . but I!—  
He loves

The Lamia-woman,—and I, write to him  
What stops his marriage, and destroys  
his peace,—

Or what perhaps shall simply trouble him,  
Until she only need to touch his sleeve  
With just a finger's tremulous white flame,  
Saying, 'Ah,—Aurora Leigh! a pretty  
tale,

A very pretty poet! I can guess  
The motive—then, to catch his eyes  
in hers

And vow she does not wonder,—and  
they two

To break in laughter as the sea along  
A melancholy coast, and float up higher,  
In such a laugh, their fatal weeds of love!  
Aye, fatal, aye. And who shall answer me  
Fate has not hurried tides,—and if to-  
night

My letter would not be a night too late,  
An arrow shot into a man that's dead,  
To prove a vain intention? Would I show  
The new wife vile, to make the husband  
mad?

No, Lamia! shut the shutters, bar the  
doors

From every glimmer on thy serpent-skin!  
I will not let thy hideous secret out  
To agonize the man I love—I mean  
The friend I love . . . as friends love.

It is strange,  
To-day while Marian told her story like  
To absorb most listeners, how I listened  
chief

To a voice not hers, nor yet that enemy's,

Nor God's in wrath, . . . but one that  
mixed with mine

Long years ago among the garden-trees,  
And said to *me*, to *me* too, 'Be my wife,  
Aurora.' It is strange with what a swell  
Of yearning passion, as a snow of ghosts  
Might beat against the impervious door  
of heaven,

I thought, 'Now, if I had been a woman,  
such

As God made women, to save men by  
love,—

By just my love I might have saved this  
man,

And made a nobler poem for the world  
Than all I have failed in.' But I failed  
besides

In this; and now he's lost! through me  
alone!

And, by my only fault, his empty house  
Sucks in, at this same hour, a wind from  
hell

To keep his hearth cold, make his case-  
ments creak

For ever to the tune of plague and sin—  
O Romney, O my Romney, O my friend,  
My cousin and friend! my helper, when  
I would,

My love, that might be! mine!

Why, how one weeps  
When one's too weary! Were a wit-  
ness by,

He'd say some folly . . . that I loved the  
man,

Who knows! . . . and make me laugh  
again for scorn.

At strongest, women are as weak in flesh,  
As men, at weakest, vilest are in soul:  
So, hard for women to keep pace with  
men!

As well give up at once, sit down at once,  
And weep as I do. Tears, tears! *why*  
we weep!

'Tis worth inquiry!—that we've shamed  
a life,

Or lost a love, or missed a world, perhaps!  
By no means. Simply, that we've  
walked too far,

Or talked too much, or felt the wind i'  
the east,—

And so we weep, as if both body and soul  
Broke up in water—this way.

Poor mixed rags

Forsooth we're made of, like those other  
dolls

That lean with pretty faces into fairs.  
It seems as if I had a man in me,  
Despising such a woman.

Yet indeed,  
To see a wrong or suffering moves us all  
To undo it though we should undo our-  
selves,

Aye, all the more, that we undo ourselves;  
That's womanly, past doubt, and not ill-  
moved.

A natural movement therefore, on my  
part,

To fill the chair up of my cousin's wife,  
And save him from a devil's company!  
We're all so,—made so—'tis our woman's  
trade

To suffer torment for another's ease.  
The world's male chivalry has perished  
out,

But women are knights-errant to the last;  
And if Cervantes had been Shakespeare  
too,

He had made his Don a Donna.

So it clears,  
And so we rain our skies blue.

Put away  
This weakness. If, as I have just now said,  
A man's within me,—let him act himself,  
Ignoring the poor conscious trouble of  
blood

That's called the woman merely. I will  
write

Plain words to England,—if too late,  
too late,

If ill-accounted, then accounted ill;  
We'll trust the heavens with something.

'Dear Lord Howe,  
You'll find a story on another leaf

Of Marian Erle,—what noble friend of  
yours

She trusted once, through what flagitious  
means,

To what disastrous ends;—the story's  
true.

I found her wandering on the Paris quays,  
A babe upon her breast,—unnatural,

Unseasonable outcast on such snow  
Unthawed to this time. I will tax in this  
Your friendship, friend, if that convicted  
She

Be not his wife yet, to denounce the facts

To himself,—but, otherwise, to let them  
pass

On tip-toe like escaping murderers,  
And tell my cousin merely—Marian lives,  
Is found, and finds her home with such  
a friend,

Myself, Aurora. Which good news,  
"She's found,"

Will help to make him merry in his love:  
I send it, tell him, for my marriage-gift,  
As good as orange-water for the nerves,  
Or perfumed gloves for headache,—  
though aware

That he, except of love, is scarcely sick:  
I mean the new love this time, . . since  
last year.

Such quick forgetting on the part of men!  
Is any shrewder trick upon the cards  
To enrich them? pray instruct me how  
'tis done:

First, clubs,—and while you look at  
clubs, 'tis spades;

That's prodigy. The lightning strikes  
a man,

And when we think to find him dead  
and charred . .

Why, there he is on a sudden, playing  
pipes

Beneath the splintered elm-tree! Crime  
and shame

And all their hoggery trample your  
smooth world,

Nor leave more footmarks than Apollo's  
kine

Whose hoofs were muffled by the thiev-  
ing god

In tamarisk-leaves and myrtle. I'm so  
sad,

So weary and sad to-night, I'm some-  
what sour,—

Forgive me. To be blue and shrew at once,  
Exceeds all toleration except yours,

But yours, I know, is infinite. Farewell.  
To-morrow we take train for Italy.

Speak gently of me to your gracious wife,  
As one, however far, shall yet be near  
In loving wishes to your house.'

I sign.  
And now I loose my heart upon a page,  
This—

'Lady Waldemar, I'm very glad  
I never liked you; which you knew so  
well

You spared me, in your turn, to like me  
much :

Your liking surely had done worse for  
me

Than has your loathing, though the last  
appears

Sufficiently unscrupulous to hurt,  
And not afraid of judgement. Now, there's  
space

Between our faces,—I stand off, as if  
I judged a stranger's portrait and pro-  
nounced

Indifferently the type was good or bad.  
What matter to me that the lines are  
false,

I ask you! did I ever ink my lips  
By drawing your name through them as  
a friend's,

Or touch your hands as lovers do?  
Thank God

I never did : and since you're proved so  
vile,

Aye, vile, I say,—we'll show it pre-  
sently,—

I'm not obliged to nurse my friend in  
you,

Or wash out my own blots, in counting  
yours,

Or even excuse myself to honest souls  
Who seek to press my lip or clasp my  
palm,—

"Alas, but Lady Waldemar came first!"

'Tis true, by this time you may near  
me so

That you're my cousin's wife. You've  
gambled deep

As Lucifer, and won the morning-star  
In that case,—and the noble house of  
Leigh

Must henceforth with its good roof shelter  
you :

I cannot speak and burn you up between  
Those rafters, I who am born a Leigh,—  
nor speak

And pierce your breast through Rom-  
ney's, I who live

His friend and cousin,—so, you're safe.  
You two

Must grow together like the tares and  
wheat

Till God's great fire.—But make the  
best of time.

'And hide this letter: let it speak no  
more

Than I shall, how you tricked poor  
Marian Erle,

And set her own love digging its own  
grave

Within her green hope's pretty garden-  
ground,—

Aye, sent her forth with some one of  
your sort

To a wicked house in France, from  
which she fled

With curses in her eyes and ears and  
throat,

Her whole soul choked with curses,—  
mad in short,

And madly scouring up and down for  
weeks

The foreign hedgeless country, lone and  
lost,—

So innocent, male-fiends might slink  
within

Remote hell-corners, seeing her so de-  
fined.

'But you,—you are a woman and more  
bold.

To do you justice, you'd not shrink to  
face . .

We'll say, the unfledged life in the other  
room,

Which, treading down God's corn, you  
trod in sight

Of all the dogs, in reach of all the  
guns,—

Aye, Marian's babe, her poor unfathered  
child,

Her yearling babe!—you'd face him  
when he wakes

And opens up his wonderful blue eyes:  
You'd meet them and not wink perhaps,

nor fear  
God's triumph in them and supreme  
revenge

When righting His creation's balance-  
scale

(You pulled as low as Tophet) to the top  
Of most celestial innocence. For me

Who am not as bold, I own those infant  
eyes

Have set me praying.

While they look at heaven,  
No need of protestation in my words

Against the place you've made them!  
let them look.

They'll do your business with the  
heavens, be sure:

I spare you common curses.

'Ponder this;  
If haply you're the wife of Romney  
Leigh

(For which inheritance beyond your birth  
You sold that poisonous porridge called  
your soul),

I charge you, be his faithful and true wife!  
Keep warm his hearth and clean his  
board, and, when

He speaks, be quick with your obedience;  
Still grind your paltry wants and low  
desires

To dust beneath his heel; though, even  
thus,

The ground must hurt him,—it was writ  
of old,

"Ye shall not yoke together ox and ass,"  
The nobler and ignobler. Aye, but you  
Shall do your part as well as such ill  
things

Can do aught good. You shall not vex  
him,—mark,

You shall not vex him, jar him when  
he's sad,

Or cross him when he's eager. Under-  
stand

To trick him with apparent sympathies,  
Nor let him see thee in the face too near  
And unlearn thy sweet seeming. Pay  
the price

Of lies, by being constrained to lie on  
still:

'Tis easy for thy sort: a million more  
Will scarcely damn thee deeper.

'Doing which  
You are very safe from Marian and myself;  
We'll breathe as softly as the infant here,  
And stir no dangerous embers. Fail  
a point,

And show our Romney wounded, ill-  
content,

Tormented in his home, we open mouth,  
And such a noise will follow, the last  
trump's

Will scarcely seem more dreadful, even  
to you;

You'll have no pipers after: Romney will  
(I know him) push you forth as none of his,

All other men declaring it well done,  
While women, even the worst, your  
like, will draw

Their skirts back, not to brush you in  
the street,

And so I warn you. I'm . . . Aurora  
Leigh.'

The letter written I felt satisfied.

The ashes, smouldering in me, were  
thrown out

By handfuls from me: I had writ my heart  
And wept my tears, and now was cool  
and calm;

And, going straightway to the neigh-  
bouring room,

I lifted up the curtains of the bed  
Where Marian Erle, the babe upon her  
arm,

Both faces leaned together like a pair  
Of folded innocences self-complete,  
Each smiling from the other, smiled and  
slept.

There seemed no sin, no shame, no  
wrath, no grief.

I felt she too had spoken words that night,  
But softer certainly, and said to God,  
Who laughs in heaven perhaps that such  
as I

Should make ado for such as she.—  
'Defiled'

I wrote? 'defiled' I thought her? Stoop,  
Stoop lower, Aurora! get the angels'  
leave

To creep in somewhere, humbly, on your  
knees,

Within this round of sequestration white  
In which they have wrapt earth's found-  
lings, heaven's elect.

The next day we took train to Italy  
And fled on southward in the roar of  
steam.

The marriage-bells of Romney must be  
loud,

To sound so clear through all: I was not  
well,

And truly, though the truth is like a jest,  
I could not choose but fancy, half the way,  
I stood alone i' the belfry, fifty bells  
Of naked iron, mad with merriment

(As one who laughs and cannot stop  
himself),

All clanking at me, in me, over me,  
Until I shrieked a shriek I could not hear,  
And swooned with noise,—but still, along  
my swoon.

Was 'ware the baffled changes backward  
rang,

Prepared, at each emerging sense, to beat  
And crash it out with clangour. I was  
weak;

I struggled for the posture of my soul  
In upright consciousness of place and  
time,

But evermore, 'twixt waking and asleep,  
Slipped somehow, staggered, caught at  
Marian's eyes

A moment (it is very good for strength  
To know that some one needs you to be  
strong),

And so recovered what I called myself,  
For that time.

I just knew it when we swept  
Above the old roofs of Dijon; Lyons  
dropped

A spark into the night, half trodden out  
Unseen. But presently the winding  
Rhône

Washed out the moonlight large along  
his banks

Which strained their yielding curves out  
clear and clean

To hold it,—shadow of town and castle  
blurred

Upon the hurrying river. Such an air  
Blew thence upon the forehead,—half  
an air

And half a water,—that I leaned and  
looked,

Then, turning back on Marian, smiled  
to mark

That she looked only on her child, who  
slept,

His face toward the moon too.

So we passed

The liberal open country and the close,  
And shot through tunnels, like a lightning-  
wedge

By great Thor-hammers driven through  
the rock,

Which, quivering through the intestine  
blackness, splits,

And lets it in at once: the train swept in  
Athrob with effort, trembling with  
resolve,

The fierce denouncing whistle wailing on  
And dying off smothered in the shuddering  
dark,

While we, self-awed, drew troubled  
breath, oppressed

As other Titans underneath the pile  
And nightmare of the mountains. Out,  
at last,

To catch the dawn afloat upon the land!  
—Hills, slung forth broadly and gauntly  
everywhere,

Not cramp: in their foundations, pushing  
wide

Rich outspreads of the vineyards and the  
corn

(As if they entertained it the name of  
France),

While, down their straining sides,  
streamed manifest

A soil as red as Charlemagne's knightly  
blood,

To consecrate the verdure. Some one  
said,

'Marseilles!' And lo, the city of  
Marseilles,

With all her ships behind her, and be-  
yond,

The scimitar of ever-shining sea

For right-hand use, bared blue against  
the sky!

That night we spent between the purple  
heaven

And purple water: I think Marian slept;  
But I, as a dog a-watch for his master's  
foot,

Who cannot sleep or eat before he hears,  
I sate upon the deck and watched the night

And listened through the stars for Italy.  
Those marriage-bells I spoke of, sounded  
far,

As some child's go-cart in the street  
beneath

To a dying man who will not pass the day,  
And knows it, holding by a hand he loves.

I too sate quiet, satisfied with death,  
Sate silent: I could hear my own soul  
speak,

And had my friend,—for Nature comes  
sometimes

And says, 'I am ambassador for God.'

I felt the wind soft from the land of  
souls;

The old miraculous mountains heaved in sight,  
 One straining past another along the shore,  
 The way of grand dull Odyssean ghosts,  
 Athirst to drink the cool blue wine of seas  
 And stare on voyagers. Peak pushing peak  
 They stood : I watched, beyond that Tyrian belt  
 Of intense sea betwixt them and the ship,  
 Down all their sides the misty olive-woods  
 Dissolving in the weak congenial moon  
 And still disclosing some brown convent-tower  
 That seems as if it grew from some brown rock,  
 Or many a little lighted village, dropt  
 Like a fallen star upon so high a point,  
 You wonder what can keep it in its place  
 From sliding headlong with the waterfalls  
 Which powder all the myrtle and orange groves  
 With spray of silver. Thus my Italy  
 Was stealing on us. Genoa broke with day,  
 The Doria's long pale palace striking out,  
 From green hills in advance of the white town,  
 A marble finger dominant to ships,  
 Seen glimmering through the uncertain grey of dawn.

And then I did not think, 'my Italy,'  
 I thought, 'my father!' O my father's house,  
 Without his presence!—Places are too much  
 Or else too little, for immortal man,—  
 Too little, when love's May o'ergrows the ground,  
 Too much, when that luxuriant robe of green  
 Is rustling to our ankles in dead leaves.  
 'Tis only good to be or here or there,  
 Because we had a dream on such a stone,  
 Or this or that,—but, once being wholly waked  
 And come back to the stone without the dream,  
 We trip upon 't,—alas, and hurt ourselves ;

Or else it falls on us and grinds us flat,  
 The heaviest grave-stone on this burying earth.

—But while I stood and mused, a quiet touch

Fell light upon my arm, and turning round,

A pair of moistened eyes convicted mine.  
 'What, Marian! is the babe astir so soon?'

'He sleeps,' she answered; 'I have crept up thrice,

And seen you sitting, standing, still at watch.

I thought it did you good till now, but now'...

'But now,' I said, 'you leave the child alone.'

'And you're alone,' she answered,—and she looked

As if I too were something. Sweet the help

Of one we have helped! Thanks, Marian, for such help.

I found a house at Florence on the hill  
 Of Bellosguardo. 'Tis a tower which keeps

A post of double-observation o'er  
 That valley of Arno (holding as a hand  
 The outspread city) straight toward Fiesole

And Mount Morello and the setting sun,  
 The Vallombrosan mountains opposite,  
 Which sunrise fills as full as crystal cups  
 Turned red to the brim because their wine is red.

No sun could die nor yet be born unseen  
 By dwellers at my villa: morn and eve  
 Were magnified before us in the pure  
 Illimitable space and pause of sky,  
 Intense as angels' garments blanched with God,

Less blue than radiant. From the outer wall

Of the garden drops the mystic floating grey

Of olive trees (with interruptions green  
 From maize and vine), until 'tis caught  
 and torn

Upon the abrupt black line of cypresses  
 Which signs the way to Florence.  
 Beautiful

The city lies along the ample vale,  
Cathedral, tower and palace, piazza and  
street,  
The river trailing like a silver cord  
Through all, and curling loosely, both  
before  
And after, over the whole stretch of  
land  
Sown whitely up and down its opposite  
slopes  
With farms and villas.

Many weeks had passed,  
No word was granted.—Last, a letter  
came  
From Vincent Carrington:—‘My dear  
Miss Leigh,  
You’ve been as silent as a poet should,  
When any other man is sure to speak.  
If sick, if vexed, if dumb, a silver piece  
Will split a man’s tongue,—straight he  
speaks and says,  
“Received that cheque.” But you! . .  
I send you funds  
To Paris, and you make no sign at all.  
Remember I’m responsible and wait  
A sign of you, Miss Leigh.

‘Meantime your book  
Is eloquent as if you were not dumb;  
And common critics, ordinarily deaf  
To such fine meanings, and, like deaf  
men, loath  
To seem deaf, answering chance-wise,  
yes or no,  
“It must be” or “it must not” (most  
pronounced  
When least convinced), pronounce for  
once aright:  
You’d think they really heard,—and so  
they do . .

The burr of three or four who really hear  
And praise your book aright: Fame’s  
smallest trump  
Is a great ear-trumpet for the deaf as  
posts,  
No other being effective. Fear not,  
friend;  
We think here you have written a good  
book,

And you, a woman! It was in you—yes,  
I felt ’twas in you: yet I doubted half  
If that od-force of German Reichenbach,  
Which still from female finger-tips burns  
blue,

Could strike out as our masculine white  
heats

To quicken a man. Forgive me. All my  
heart

Is quick with yours since, just a fort-  
night since,

I read your book and loved it.

‘Will you love  
My wife, too? Here’s my secret I  
might keep

A month more from you! but I yield  
it up

Because I know you’ll write the sooner  
for’t,

Most women (of your height even) count-  
ing love

Life’s only serious business. Who’s  
my wife

That shall be in a month, you ask? nor  
guess?

Remember what a pair of topaz eyes  
You once detected, turned against the  
wall,

That morning in my London painting-  
room;

The face half-sketched, and slurred;  
the eyes alone!

But you . . you caught them up with  
yours, and said

“Kate Ward’s eyes, surely.”—Now I  
own the truth:

I had thrown them there to keep them  
safe from Jove,

They would so naughtily find out their  
way

To both the heads of both my Danaës  
Where just it made me mad to look at  
them.

Such eyes! I could not paint or think  
of eyes

But those,—and so I flung them into  
paint

And turned them to the wall’s care.  
Aye, but now

I’ve let them out, my Kate’s: I’ve  
painted her,

(I change my style and leave myologies)  
The whole sweet face; it looks upon  
my soul

Like a face on water, to beget itself.

A half-length portrait, in a hanging cloak  
Like one you wore once; ’tis a little  
frayed,—

I pressed too for the nude harmonious  
arm—  
But she, she'd have her way, and have  
her cloak;  
She said she could be like you only so,  
And would not miss the fortune. Ah,  
my friend,  
You'll write and say she shall not miss  
your love  
Through meeting mine? in faith, she  
would not change.  
She has your books by heart more than  
my words,  
And quotes you up against me till I'm  
pushed  
Where, three months since, her eyes  
were : nay, in fact,  
Nought satisfied her but to make me paint  
Your last book folded in her dimpled  
hands  
Instead of my brown palette as I wished,  
And, grant me, the presentment had been  
newer;  
She'd grant me nothing : I compounded  
for  
The naming of the wedding-day next  
month,  
And gladly too. 'Tis pretty, to remark  
How women can love women of your  
sort,  
And tie their hearts with love-knots to  
your feet,  
Grow insolent about you against men  
And put us down by putting up the lip,  
As if a man,—there *are* such, let us own,  
Who write not ill,—remains a man,  
poor wretch,  
While you—! Write weaker than  
Aurora Leigh,  
And there'll be women who believe of you  
(Besides my Kate) that if you walked  
on sand  
You would not leave a footprint.  
'Are you put  
To wonder by my marriage, like poor  
Leigh?  
'Kate Ward!' he said. 'Kate Ward!'  
he said anew.  
'I thought . . .' he said, and stopped,—  
'I did not think . . .'  
And then he dropped to silence.  
'Ah, he's changed.  
I had not seen him, you're aware, for long,

But went of course. I have not touched  
on this  
Through all this letter,—conscious of  
your heart,  
And writing lightlier for the heavy fact,  
As clocks are voluble with lead.  
'How poor,  
To say I'm sorry! dear Leigh, dearest  
Leigh.  
In those old days of Shropshire,—pardon  
me,—  
When he and you fought many a field of  
gold  
On what you should do, or you should  
not do,  
Make bread or verses (it just came to  
that),  
I thought you'd one day draw a silken  
peace  
Through a golden ring. I thought so :  
foolishly,  
The event proved,—for you went more  
opposite  
To each other, month by month, and  
year by year,  
Until this happened. God knows best,  
we say,  
But hoarsely. When the fever took him  
first,  
Just after I had writ to you in France,  
They tell me Lady Waldemar mixed  
drinks  
And counted grains, like any salaried  
nurse,  
Excepting that she wept too. Then  
Lord Howe,  
You're right about Lord Howe, Lord  
Howe's a trump,  
And yet, with such in his hand, a man  
like Leigh  
May lose as he does. There's an end to all,  
Yes, even this letter, though this second  
sheet  
May find you doubtful. Write a word  
for Kate :  
She reads my letters always, like a wife,  
And if she sees her name I'll see her smile  
And share the luck. So, bless you,  
friend of two !  
I will not ask you what your feeling is  
At Florence with my pictures; I can hear  
Your heart a-flutter over the snow-hills:  
And, just to pace the Pitti with you once,

I'd give a half-hour of to-morrow's walk  
With Kate. . . I think so. Vincent Car-  
rington.'

The noon was hot; the air scorched  
like the sun

And was shut out. The closed persiani  
threw

Their long-scored shadows on my villa-  
floor,

And interlined the golden atmosphere  
Straight, still,—across the pictures on  
the wall,

The statuette on the console (of young  
Love

And Psyche made one marble by a kiss),  
The low couch where I leaned, the  
table near,

The vase of lilies Marian pulled last night  
(Each green leaf and each white leaf  
ruled in black

As if for writing some new text of fate),  
And the open letter, rested on my knee,  
But there the lines swerved, trembled,  
though I sat

Untroubled, plainly, reading it again  
And three times. Well, he's married;  
that is clear.

No wonder that he's married, nor much  
more

That Vincent's therefore 'sorry.' Why,  
of course

The lady nursed him when he was not  
well,

Mixed drinks,—unless nepenthe was the  
drink

'Twas scarce worth telling. But a man  
in love

Will see the whole sex in his mistress'  
hood,

The prettier for its lining of fair rose,  
Although he catches back and says at  
last,

'I'm sorry.' Sorry. Lady Waldemar  
At prettiest, under the said hood, pre-  
served

From such a light as I could hold to her face  
To flare its ugly wrinkles out to shame,  
Is scarce a wife for Romney, as friends  
judge,

Aurora Leigh or Vincent Carrington,  
That's plain. And if he's 'conscious  
of my heart' . .

It may be natural, though the phrase is  
strong

(One's apt to use strong phrases, being  
in love);

And even that stuff of 'fields of gold,'  
'gold rings,'

And what he 'thought,' poor Vincent,  
what he 'thought.'

May never mean enough to ruffle me.  
—Why, this room stifles. Better burn  
than choke;

Best have air, air, although it comes  
with fire,—

Throw open blinds and windows to the  
noon

And take a blister on my brow instead  
Of this dead weight! best, perfectly be  
stunned

By those insufferable cicale, sick  
And hoarse with rapture of the summer-  
heat,

That sing, like poets, till their hearts  
break,—sing

Till men say, 'It's too tedious.'

Books succeed,  
And lives fail. Do I feel it so, at last?

Kate loves a worn-out cloak for being  
like mine,

While I live self-despised for being my-  
self,

And yearn toward some one else, who  
yearns away

From what he is, in his turn. Strain a step  
For ever, yet gain no step? Are we such,

We cannot, with our admirations even,  
Our tip-toe aspirations, touch a thing

That's higher than we? Is all a dismal flat,  
And God alone above each, as the sun

O'er level lagunes, to make them shine  
and stink,—

Laying stress upon us with immediate  
flame,

While we respond with our miasmal fog  
And call it mounting higher because we  
grow

More highly fatal?

Tush, Aurora Leigh!

You wear your sackcloth looped in  
Caesar's way

And brag your failings as mankind's.  
Be still.

There's what's higher, in this very  
world,

Than you can live, or catch at. Stand  
 aside,  
 And look at others—instance little Kate!  
 She'll make a perfect wife for Carrington.  
 She always has been looking round the  
 earth  
 For something good and green to alight  
 upon  
 And nestle into, with those soft-winged  
 eyes,  
 Subsiding now beneath his manly hand  
 'Twixt trembling lids of inexpressive joy.  
 I will not scorn her, after all, too much,  
 That so much she should love me :  
 a wise man  
 Can pluck a leaf, and find a lecture in 't;  
 And I, too, . . . God has made me,—I've  
 a heart  
 That's capable of worship, love, and loss;  
 We say the same of Shakespeare's.  
 I'll be meek  
 And learn to reverence, even this poor  
 myself.  
 The book, too—pass it. 'A good book,'  
 says he,  
 'And you a woman.' I had laughed  
 at that,  
 But long since. I'm a woman,—it is true;  
 Alas, and woe to us, when we feel it most!  
 Then, least care have we for the crowns  
 and goals  
 And compliments on writing our good  
 books.  
 The book has some truth in it, I believe,  
 And truth outlives pain, as the soul does  
 life.  
 I know we talk our Phaedons to the end,  
 Through all the dismal faces that we make,  
 O'er-wrinkled with dishonouring agony  
 From decomposing drugs. I have  
 written truth,  
 And I a woman,—feebly, partially,  
 Inapty in presentation, Romney'll add,  
 Because a woman. For the truth itself,  
 That's neither man's nor woman's, but  
 just God's,  
 None else has reason to be proud of truth:  
 Himself will see it sifted, disenthralled,  
 And kept upon the height and in the  
 light,  
 As far as and no farther than 'tis truth;

For, now He has left off calling firma-  
 ments  
 And strata, flowers and creatures, very  
 good,  
 He says it still of truth, which is His own.  
 Truth, so far, in my book;—the truth  
 which draws  
 Through all things upwards,—that a  
 twofold world  
 Must go to a perfect cosmos. Natural  
 things  
 And spiritual,—who separates those two  
 In art, in morals, or the social drift,  
 Tears up the bond of nature and brings  
 death,  
 Paints futile pictures, writes unreal verse,  
 Leads vulgar days, deals ignorantly  
 with men,  
 Is wrong, in short, at all points. We  
 divide  
 This apple of life, and cut it through the  
 pips,—  
 The perfect round which fitted Venus'  
 hand  
 Has perished as utterly as if we ate  
 Both halves. Without the spiritual,  
 observe,  
 The natural's impossible,—no form,  
 No motion: without sensuous, spiritual  
 Is inappreciable,—no beauty or power:  
 And in this twofold sphere the twofold  
 man  
 (For still the artist is intensely a man)  
 Holds firmly by the natural, to reach  
 The spiritual beyond it,—fixes still  
 The type with mortal vision, to pierce  
 through,  
 With eyes immortal, to the antetype  
 Some call the ideal,—better called the  
 real,  
 And certain to be called so presently  
 When things shall have their names.  
 Look long enough  
 On any peasant's face here, coarse and  
 lined,  
 You'll catch Antinous somewhere in  
 that clay,  
 As perfect featured as he yearns at Rome  
 From marble pale with beauty; then  
 persist,  
 And, if your apprehension's competent,  
 You'll find some fairer angel at his back,

As much exceeding him as he the boor,  
 And pushing him with empyreal disdain  
 For ever out of sight. Aye, Carrington  
 Is glad of such a creed: an artist must,  
 Who paints a tree, a leaf, a common  
 stone  
 With just his hand, and finds it suddenly  
 A-piece with and conterminous to his  
 soul.  
 Why else do these things move him,  
 leaf, or stone?  
 The bird's not moved, that pecks at  
 a spring-shoot;  
 Nor yet the horse, before a quarry  
 a-graze:  
 But man, the twofold creature, apprehends  
 The twofold manner, in and outwardly,  
 And nothing in the world comes single  
 to him,  
 A mere itself,—cup, column, or candle-  
 stick,  
 All patterns of what shall be in the  
 Mount;  
 The whole temporal show related royally,  
 And built up to eterne significance  
 Through the open arms of God.  
 'There's nothing great  
 Nor small,' has said a poet of our day,  
 Whose voice will ring beyond the  
 curfew of eve  
 And not be thrown out by the matin's  
 bell:  
 And truly, I reiterate, nothing's small!  
 No lily-muffled hum of a summer-bee,  
 But finds some coupling with the  
 spinning stars;  
 No pebble at your foot, but proves  
 a sphere;  
 No chaffinch, but implies the cherubim;  
 And (glancing on my own thin, veined  
 wrist),  
 In such a little tremor of the blood  
 The whole strong clamour of a vehement  
 soul  
 Doth utter itself distinct. Earth's  
 crammed with heaven,  
 And every common bush afire with God;  
 But only he who sees, takes off his shoes,  
 The rest sit round it and pluck black-  
 berries,  
 And daub their natural faces unaware  
 More and more from the first similitude.

Truth, so far, in my book! a truth  
 which draws  
 From all things upward. I, Aurora, still  
 Have felt it hound me through the  
 wastes of life  
 As Jove did Io; and, until that Hand  
 Shall overtake me wholly and on my head  
 Lay down its large unfluctuating peace,  
 The feverish gad-fly pricks me up and  
 down.  
 It must be. Art's the witness of what Is  
 Behind this show. If this world's show  
 were all,  
 Then imitation would be all in Art;  
 There, Jove's hand gripes us!—For we  
 stand here, we,  
 If genuine artists, witnessing for God's  
 Complete, consummate, undivided work;  
 —That every natural flower which  
 grows on earth  
 Implies a flower upon the spiritual side,  
 Substantial, archetypal, all a-glow  
 With blossoming causes,—not so far  
 away,  
 But we, whose spirit-sense is somewhat  
 cleared,  
 May catch at something of the bloom  
 and breath.—  
 Too vaguely apprehended, though in-  
 deed  
 Still apprehended, consciously or not,  
 And still transferred to picture, music,  
 verse,  
 For thrilling audient and beholding souls  
 By signs and touches which are known  
 to souls.  
 How known, they know not,—why,  
 they cannot find,  
 So straight call out on genius, say, 'A man  
 Produced this,' when much rather they  
 should say,  
 'Tis insight and he saw this.'  
 Thus is Art  
 Self-magnified in magnifying a truth  
 Which, fully recognized, would change  
 the world  
 And shift its morals. If a man could feel,  
 Not one day, in the artist's ecstasy,  
 But every day, feast, fast, or working-day,  
 The spiritual significance burn through  
 The hieroglyphic of material shows,  
 Henceforward he would paint the globe  
 with wings,

And reverence fish and fowl, the bull,  
the tree,  
And even his very body as a man,—  
Which now he counts so vile, that all  
the towns  
Make offal of their daughters for its use,  
On summer-nights, when God is sad in  
heaven  
To think what goes on in His recreant  
world  
He made quite other; while that moon  
He made  
Toshinethere, at the first love's covenant,  
Shines still, convictive as a marriage-ring  
Before adulterous eyes.

How sure it is,  
That, if we say a true word, instantly  
We feel 'tis God's, not ours, and pass it on  
Like bread at sacrament we taste and pass  
Nor handle for a moment, as indeed  
We dared to set up any claim to such!  
And I—my poem,—let my readers talk.  
I'm closer to it—I can speak as well:  
I'll say with Romney, that the book is  
weak,  
The range uneven, the points of sight  
obscure,  
The music interrupted.

Let us go.  
The end of woman (or of man, I think)  
Is not a book. Alas, the best of books  
Is but a word in Art, which soon grows  
cramped,  
Stiff, dubious-statured with the weight of  
years,  
And drops an accent or digamma down  
Some cranny of unfathomable time,  
Beyond the critic's reaching. Art itself,  
We've called the larger life, must feel  
the soul  
Live past it. For more's felt than is  
perceived,  
And more's perceived than can be in-  
terpreted,  
And Love strikes higher with his lambent  
flame  
Than Art can pile the faggots.

Is it so?  
When Jove's hand meets us with com-  
posing touch,  
And when at last we are hushed and  
satisfied,  
Then lo does not call it truth, but love?

Well, well! my father was an English-  
man:

My mother's blood in me is not so strong  
That I should bear this stress of Tuscan  
noon

And keep my wits. The town, there,  
seems to seethe

In this Medæan boil-pot of the sun,  
And all the patient hills are bubbling  
round

As if a prick would leave them flat.  
Does heaven

Keep far off, not to set us in a blaze?  
Not so,—let drag your fiery fringes,  
heaven,

And burn us up to quiet. Ah, we know  
Too much here, not to know what's  
best for peace;

We have too much light here, not to  
want more fire

To purify and end us. We talk, talk,  
Conclude upon divine philosophies,  
And get the thanks of men for hopeful  
books,

Whereat we take our own life up, and . .  
pshaw!

Unless we piece it with another's life  
(A yard of silk to carry out our lawn)  
As well suppose my little handkerchief  
Would cover Samminiato, church and  
all,

If out I threw it past the cypresses,  
As, in this ragged, narrow life of mine,  
Contain my own conclusions.

But at least  
We'll shut up the persians and sit down,  
And when my head's done aching, in  
the cool,

Write just a word to Kate and Carrington.  
May joy be with them! she has chosen  
well,

And he not ill.

I should be glad, I think,  
Except for Romney. Had *he* married  
Kate,

I surely, surely, should be very glad.  
This Florence sits upon me easily,

With native air and tongue. My graves  
are calm,

And do not too much hurt me. Marian's  
good,

Gentle and loving,—lets me hold the  
child,

Or drags him up the hills to find me  
 flowers  
 And fill these vases ere I'm quite  
 awake,—  
 My grandiose red tulips, which grow  
 wild,  
 Or Dante's purple lilies, which he blew  
 To a larger bubble with his prophet  
 breath,  
 Or one of those tall flowering reeds that  
 stand  
 In Arno, like a sheaf of sceptres left  
 By some remote dynasty of dead gods  
 To suck the stream for ages and get green,  
 And blossom wheresoe'er a hand divine  
 Had warmed the place with ichor. Such  
 I find  
 At early morning laid across my bed,  
 And wake up pelted with a childish laugh  
 Which even Marian's low precipitous  
 'hush'  
 Has vainly interposed to put away,—  
 While I, with shut eyes, smile and  
 motion for  
 The dewy kiss that's very sure to come  
 From mouth and cheeks, the whole  
 child's face at once  
 Dissolved on mine,—as if a nosegay burst  
 Its string with the weight of roses over-  
 blown,  
 And dropt upon me. Surely I should  
 be glad.  
 The little creature almost loves me now,  
 And calls my name, 'Alola,' stripping off  
 The *rs* like thorns, to make it smooth  
 enough  
 To take between his dainty, milk-fed lips,  
 God love him! I should certainly be glad,  
 Except, God help me, that I'm sorrowful  
 Because of Romney.  
 Romney, Romney! Well,  
 This grows absurd!—too like a tune that  
 runs  
 I' the head, and forces all things in the  
 world,  
 Wind, rain, the creaking gnat, or stut-  
 tering fly,  
 To sing itself and vex you,—yet perhaps  
 A paltry tune you never fairly liked,  
 Some 'I'd be a butterfly,' or 'C'est  
 l'amour':  
 We're made so,—not such tyrants to  
 ourselves

But still we are slaves to nature. Some  
 of us  
 Are turned, too, overmuch like some poor  
 verse  
 With a trick of ritournelle: the same  
 thing goes  
 And comes back ever.  
 Vincent Carrington  
 Is 'sorry,' and I'm sorry; but *he's* strong  
 To mount from sorrow to his heaven of  
 love,  
 And when he says at moments, 'Poor,  
 poor Leigh,  
 Who'll never call his own so true a heart,  
 So fair a face even,'—he must quickly lose  
 The pain of pity, in the blush he makes  
 By his very pitying eyes. The snow,  
 for him,  
 Has fallen in May and finds the whole  
 earth warm,  
 And melts at the first touch of the green  
 grass.  
 But Romney,—he has chosen, after all.  
 I think he had as excellent a sun  
 To see by, as most others, and perhaps  
 Has scarce seen really worse than some  
 of us  
 When all's said. Let him pass. I'm  
 not too much  
 A woman, not to be a man for once  
 And bury all my Dead like Alaric,  
 Depositing the treasures of my soul  
 In this drained water-course, then letting  
 flow  
 The river of life again with commerce-  
 ships  
 And pleasure-barges full of silks and  
 songs.  
 Blow, winds, and help us.  
 Ah, we mock ourselves  
 With talking of the winds; perhaps as  
 much  
 With other resolutions. How it weighs,  
 This hot, sick air! and how I covet here  
 The Dead's provision on the river-couch,  
 With silver curtains drawn on tinkling  
 rings!  
 Or else their rest in quiet crypts,—laid by  
 From heat and noise;—from those cicale,  
 say,  
 And this more vexing heart-beat.  
 So it is:

We covet for the soul, the body's part,  
 To die and rot. Even so, Aurora, ends  
 Our aspiration who bespoke our place  
 So far in the east. The occidental flats  
 Had fed us fatter, therefore? we have  
 climbed  
 Where herbage ends? we want the  
 beast's part now,  
 And tire of the angel's?—Men define a  
 man,  
 The creature who stands front-ward to  
 the stars,  
 The creature who looks inward to him-  
 self,  
 The tool-wright, laughing creature. 'Tis  
 enough:  
 We'll say instead, the inconsequent  
 creature, man,  
 For that's his specialty. What creature  
 else  
 Conceives the circle, and then walks the  
 square?  
 Loves things proved bad, and leaves a  
 thing proved good?  
 You think the bee makes honey half a  
 year,  
 To loathe the comb in winter and desire  
 The little ant's food rather? But a man—  
 Note men!—they are but women after all,  
 As women are but Auroras!—there are  
 men  
 Born tender, apt to pale at a trodden  
 worm,  
 Who paint for pastime, in their favourite  
 dream,  
 Spruce auto-vestments flowered with  
 crocus-flames.  
 There are, too, who believe in hell, and lie;  
 There are, too, who believe in heaven,  
 and fear:  
 There are, who waste their souls in  
 working out  
 Life's problem on these sands betwixt  
 two tides,  
 Concluding,—'Give us the oyster's part,  
 in death.'  
 Alas, long-suffering and most patient  
 God,  
 Thou needst be surelier God to bear  
 with us  
 Than even to have made us! Thou aspire,  
 aspire

From henceforth for me! Thou who hast  
 Thyself  
 Endured this fleshhood, knowing how  
 as a soaked  
 And sucking vesture it can drag us down  
 And choke us in the melancholy Deep,  
 Sustain me, that with Thee I walk these  
 waves,  
 Resisting!—breathe me upward, Thou  
 in me  
 Aspiring who art the way, the truth, the  
 life,—  
 That no truth henceforth seem indifferent,  
 No way to truth laborious, and no life,  
 Not even this life I live, intolerable!  
 The days went by. I took up the old days,  
 With all their Tuscan pleasures worn  
 and spoiled,  
 Like some lost book we dropped in the  
 long grass  
 On such a happy summer-afternoon  
 When last we read it with a loving friend,  
 And find in autumn when the friend is  
 gone,  
 The grass cut short, the weather changed,  
 too late,  
 And stare at, as at something wonderful  
 For sorrow,—thinking how two hands  
 before  
 Had held-up what is left to only one,  
 And how we smiled when such a vehem-  
 ent nail  
 Impressed the tiny dint here which  
 presents  
 This verse in fire for ever. Tenderly  
 And mournfully I lived. I knew the birds  
 And insects,—which looked fathered by  
 the flowers  
 And emulous of their hues: I recognized  
 The moths, with that great overpoise of  
 wings  
 Which make a mystery of them how at all  
 They can stop flying: butterflies, that  
 bear  
 Upon their blue wings such red embers  
 round,  
 They seem to scorch the blue air into holes  
 Each flight they take: and fire-flies, that  
 suspire  
 In short soft lapses of transported flame  
 Across the tingling Dark, while overhead  
 The constant and inviolable stars

Outburn those light-of-love: melodious  
owls

(If music had but one note and was sad,  
'Twould sound just so); and all the  
silent swirl

Of bats that seem to follow in the air  
Some grand circumference of a shadowy  
dome

To which we are blind: and then the  
nightingales,

Which pluck our heart across a garden-  
wall

(When walking in the town) and carry it  
So high into the bowery almond-trees  
We tremble and are afraid, and feel as if  
The golden flood of moonlight unaware  
Dissolved the pillars of the steady earth  
And made it less substantial. And I  
knew

The harmless opal snakes, the large-  
mouthed frogs

(Those noisy vaunters of their shallow  
streams);

And lizards, the green lightnings of the  
wall,

Which, if you sit down quiet, nor sigh  
loud,

Will flatter you and take you for a stone,  
And flash familiarly about your feet

With such prodigious eyes in such small  
heads!—

I knew them (though they had some-  
what dwindled from

My childish imagery), and kept in mind  
How last I sate among them equally,

In fellowship and mateship, as a child  
Feels equal still toward insect, beast,

and bird,

Before the Adam in him has forgone  
All privilege of Eden,—making friends

And talk with such a bird or such a goat,  
And buying many a two-inch-wide rush-  
cage

To let out the caged cricket on a tree,  
Saying, 'Oh, my dear grillino, were you  
cramped?

And are you happy with the ilex-leaves?  
And do you love me who have let you go?

Say *yes* in singing, and I'll understand.'

But now the creatures all seemed farther  
off,

No longer mine, nor like me, only *there*,

A gulf between us. I could yearn  
indeed,

Like other rich men, for a drop of dew  
To cool this heat,—a drop of the early  
dew,

The irrecoverable child-innocence  
(Before the heart took fire and withered  
life)

When childhood might pair equally with  
birds;

But now . . the birds were grown too  
proud for us!

Alas, the very sun forbids the dew.

And I, I had come back to an empty nest,  
Which every bird's too wise for. How  
I heard

My father's step on that deserted ground,  
His voice along that silence, as he told  
The names of bird and insect, tree and  
flower,

And all the presentations of the stars  
Across Valdarno, interposing still

'My child,' 'my child.' When fathers  
say 'my child,'

'Tis easier to conceive the universe,  
And life's transitions down the steps of  
law.

I rode once to the little mountain-house  
As fast as if to find my father there,

But, when in sight of 't, within fifty yards,  
I dropped my horse's bridle on his neck

And paused upon his flank. The house's  
front

Was cased with lingots of ripe Indian  
corn

In tessellated order and device  
Of golden patterns, not a stone of wall

Uncovered—not an inch of room to grow  
A vine-leaf. The old porch had dis-  
appeared;

And right in the open doorway sate a girl  
At plaiting straws, her black hair strained  
away

To a scarlet kerchief caught beneath her  
chin

In Tuscan fashion,—her full ebon eyes,  
Which looked too heavy to be lifted so,

Still dropped and lifted toward the mul-  
berry-tree

On which the lads were busy with their  
staves

In shout and laughter, stripping every  
bough

Asbare as winter, of those summer leaves  
My father had not changed for all the silk  
In which the ugly silkworms hide them-  
selves.

Enough. My horse recoiled before my  
heart;

I turned therein abruptly. Back we went  
As fast, to Florence.

That was trial enough  
Of graves. I would not visit, if I could,  
My father's, or my mother's any more,  
To see if stone-cutter or lichen beat  
So early in the race, or throw my flowers,  
Which could not out-smell heaven or  
sweeten earth.

They live too far above, that I should  
look

So far below to find them : let me think  
That rather they are visiting my grave,  
Called life here (undeveloped yet to life),  
And that they drop upon me, now and  
then,

For token or for solace, some small weed  
Least odorous of the growths of paradise,  
To spare such pungent scents as kill with  
joy.

My old Assunta, too, was dead, was  
dead—

O land of all men's past ! for me alone,  
It would not mix its tenses. I was past,  
It seemed, like others,—only not in  
heaven.

And many a Tuscan eve I wandered down  
The cypress alley like a restless ghost  
That tries its feeble ineffectual breath  
Upon its own charred funeral-brands  
put out

Too soon, where black and stiff stood  
up the trees

Against the broad vermilion of the skies.  
Such skies!—all clouds abolished in a  
sweep

Of God's skirt, with a dazzle to ghosts  
and men,

As down I went, saluting on the bridge  
The hem of such before 'twas caught away  
Beyond the peaks of Lucca. Underneath,  
The river, just escaping from the weight  
Of that intolerable glory, ran  
In acquiescent shadow murmuringly ;

While, up beside it, streamed the festa-  
folk

With fellow-murmurs from their feet  
and fans,

And *issimo* and *mo* and sweet poise  
Of vowels in their pleasant scandalous  
talk ;

Returning from the grand-duke's dairy-  
farm

Before the trees grew dangerous at eight  
(For, 'trust no tree by moonlight,'  
Tuscans say),

To eat their ice at Donay's tenderly,—  
Each lovely lady close to a cavalier  
Who holds her dear fan while she feeds  
her smile

On meditative spoonfuls of vanille  
And listens to his hot-breathed vows of  
love

Enough to thaw her cream and scorch  
his beard.

'Twas little matter. I could pass them by  
Indifferently, not fearing to be known.  
No danger of being wrecked upon a friend,  
And forced to take an iceberg for an isle!  
The very English, here, must wait and  
learn

To hang the cobweb of their gossip out  
To catch a fly. I'm happy. It's sublime,  
This perfect solitude of foreign lands !  
To be, as if you had not been till then,  
And were then, simply that you chose  
to be :

To spring up, not be brought forth from  
the ground,  
Like grasshoppers at Athens, and skip  
thrice

Before a woman makes a pounce on you  
And plants you in her hair!—possess,  
yourself,

A new world all alive with creatures new,  
New sun, new moon, new flowers, new  
people—ah,

And be possessed by none of them ! no  
right

In one, to call your name, inquire your  
where,

Or what you think of Mister Some-one's  
book,

Or Mister Other's marriage or decease,  
Or how's the headache which you had  
last week,

Or why you look so pale still, since it 's  
gone!

—Such most surprising riddance of one's  
life

Comes next one's death; 'tis disem-  
bodiment

Without the pang. I marvel, people  
choose

To stand stock-still like fakirs, till the  
moss

Grows on them and they cry out, self-  
admired,

'How verdant and how virtuous!'

Well, I'm glad:

Or should be, if grown foreign to myself  
As surely as to others.

Musing so,

I walked the narrow unrecognized  
streets,

Where many a palace-front peers  
gloomily

Through stony vizors iron-barred (pre-  
pared

Alike, should foe or lover pass that way,  
Forguest or victim), and came wandering  
out

Upon the churches with mild open doors  
And plaintive wail of vespers, where a

few,  
Those chiefly women, sprinkled round  
in blots

Upon the dusky pavement, knelt and  
prayed

Toward the altar's silver glory. Oft a ray  
(I liked to sit and watch) would tremble

out,  
Just touch some face more lifted, more  
in need

(Of course a woman's),—while I dreamed  
a tale

To fit its fortunes. There was one who  
looked

As if the earth had suddenly grown too  
large

Forsuch a little humpbacked thing as she;  
The pitiful black kerchief round her neck

Sole proof she had had a mother. One,  
again,

Looked sick for love,—seemed praying  
some soft saint

To put more virtue in the new fine scarf  
She spent a fortnight's meals on, yester-

day,

That cruel Gigi might return his eyes  
From Giuliana. There was one, so old.

So old, to kneel grew easier than to  
stand,—

So solitary, she accepts at last  
Our Lady for her gossip, and frets on

Against the sinful world which goes its  
rounds

In marrying and being married, just the  
same

As when 'twas almost good and had  
the right

(Her Gian alive, and she herself eighteen).

'And yet, now even, if Madonna willed.

She'd win a tern in Thursday's lottery  
And better all things. Did she dream

for nought,

That, boiling cabbage for the fast-day's  
soup,

It smelt like blessed entrails! such a  
dream

For nought? would sweetest Mary cheat  
her so,

And lose that certain candle, straight  
and white

As any fair grand-duchess in her teens,  
Which otherwise should flare here in

a week?  
*Benigna sis*, thou beauteous Queen of  
heaven!'

I sate there musing, and imagining  
Such utterance from such faces: poor

blind souls

That writhe toward heaven along the  
devil's trail,—

Who knows, I thought, but He may  
stretch His hand

And pick them up? 'tis written in the  
Book

He heareth the young ravens when they  
cry,

And yet they cry for carrion.—O my  
God,

And we, who make excuses for the rest,  
We do it in our measure. Then I knelt,

And dropped my head upon the pave-  
ment too,

And prayed, since I was foolish in desire  
Like other creatures, craving offal-food,

That He would stop His ears to what  
I said,

And only listen to the run and beat

Of this poor, passionate, helpless blood—  
 And then  
 I lay, and spoke not: but He heard in  
 heaven.

So many Tuscan evenings passed the  
 same.

I could not lose a sunset on the bridge,  
 And would not miss a vigil in the church,  
 And liked to mingle with the outdoor  
 crowd

So strange and gay and ignorant of my  
 face,

For men you know not, are as good as  
 trees.

And only once, at the Santissima,  
 I almost chanced upon a man I knew,  
 Sir Blaise Delorme. He saw me  
 certainly,

And somewhat hurried, as he crossed  
 himself,

The smoothness of the action,—then  
 half bowed,

But only half, and merely to my shade,  
 I slipped so quick behind the porphyry  
 plinth

And left him dubious if 'twas really I  
 Or peradventure Satan's usual trick  
 To keep a mounting saint uncanonized.  
 But he was safe for that time, and I too;  
 The argent angels in the altar-flare  
 Absorbed his soul next moment. The  
 good man!

In England we were scarce acquaint-  
 tances,

That here in Florence he should keep  
 my thought

Beyond the image on his eye, which came  
 And went: and yet his thought dis-  
 turbed my life:

For, after that, I oftener sate at home  
 On evenings, watching how they fined  
 themselves

With gradual conscience to a perfect  
 night,

Until the moon, diminished to a curve,  
 Lay out there like a sickle for His hand  
 Who cometh down at last to reap the  
 earth.

At such times, ended seemed my trade  
 of verse;

I feared to jingle bells upon my robe  
 Before the four-faced silent cherubim:

With God so near me, could I sing of God?  
 I did not write, nor read, nor even think,  
 But sate absorbed amid the quickening  
 glooms,

Most like some passive broken lump of salt  
 Dropped in by chance to a bowl of  
 oenomei,

To spoil the drink a little and lose itself,  
 Dissolving slowly, slowly, until lost.

## EIGHTH BOOK

ONE eve it happened, when I sate alone,  
 Alone, upon the terrace of my tower,  
 A book upon my knees to counterfeit  
 The reading that I never read at all,  
 While Marian, in the garden down below,  
 Kneelt by the fountain I could just hear  
 thrill

The drowsy silence of the exhausted day,  
 And peeled a new fig from that purple  
 heap

In the grass beside her, turning out the  
 red

To feed her eager child (who sucked at it  
 With vehement lips across a gap of air  
 As he stood opposite, face and curls a-  
 flame

With that last sun-ray, crying, 'give me,  
 give,'

And stamping with imperious baby-feet,  
 We're all born princes) — something  
 startled me,—

The laugh of sad and innocent souls,  
 that breaks

Abruptly, as if frightened at itself.

'Twas Marian laughed. I saw her  
 glance above

In sudden shame that I should hear her  
 laugh,

And straightway dropped my eyes upon  
 my book,

And knew, the first time, 'twas Boc-  
 caccio's tale,

The Falcon's, of the lover who for love  
 Destroyed the best that loved him.  
 Some of us

Do it still, and then we sit and laugh  
 no more.

Laugh you, sweet Marian,—you've the  
 right to laugh,

Since God Himself is for you, and a child!  
For me there's somewhat less,—and so  
I sigh.

The heavens were making room to hold  
the night,

The sevenfold heavens unfolding all their  
gates

To let the stars out slowly (prophesied  
In close-approaching advent, not dis-  
cerned),

While still the cue-owls from the cy-  
presses

Of the Poggio called and counted every  
pulse

Of the skyey palpitation. Gradually  
The purple and transparent shadows slow  
Had filled up the whole valley to the brim,  
And flooded all the city, which you saw  
As some drowned city in some enchanted  
sea,

Cut off from nature,—drawing you who  
gaze,

With passionate desire, to leap and  
plunge

And find a sea-king with a voice of waves,  
And treacherous soft eyes, and slippery  
locks

You cannot kiss but you shall bring away  
Their salt upon your lips. The duomo-  
bell

Strikes ten, as if it struck ten fathoms  
down,

Sodeep ; and twenty churches answer it  
The same, with twenty various instances.  
Some gaslights tremble along squares  
and streets :

The Pitti's palace-front is drawn in fire ;  
And, past the quays, Maria Novella Place,  
In which the mystic obelisks stand up  
Triangular, pyramidal, each based  
Upon its four-square brazen tortoises,  
To guard that fair church, Buonarroti's  
Bride,

That stares out from her large blind  
dial-eyes

(Her quadrant and armillary dials, black  
With rhythms of many suns and moons),  
in vain

Inquiry for so rich a soul as his.  
Methinks I have plunged, I see it all so  
clear . .

And, O my heart, . . the sea-king !

In my ears  
The sound of waters. There he stood,  
my king !

I felt him, rather than beheld him. Up  
I rose, as if he were my king indeed,  
And then sate down, in trouble at myself,  
And struggling for my woman's empery.  
'Tis pitiful ; but women are so made :  
We'll die for you perhaps,—'tis prob-  
able ;

But we'll not spare you an inch of our  
full height :

We'll have our whole just stature,—five  
feet four,

Though laid out in our coffins : pitiful  
—' You, Romney !—Lady Waldemar  
is here !'

He answered in a voice which was not  
his.

' I have her letter ; you shall read it soon.  
But first, I must be heard a little, I,  
Who have waited long and travelled far  
for that,

Although you thought to have shut  
a tedious book

And farewell. Ah, you dog-eared such  
a page,

And here you find me.'

Did he touch my hand,  
Or but my sleeve ? I trembled, hand  
and foot,—

He must have touched me.—' Will you  
sit ?' I asked,

And motioned to a chair ; but down he  
sate,

A little slowly, as a man in doubt,  
Upon the couch beside me,—couch and  
chair

Being wheeled upon the terrace.

' You are come,  
My cousin Romney ?—this is wonderful.  
But all is wonder on such summer-nights ;  
And nothing should surprise us any more,  
Who see that miracle of stars. Behold.'

I signed above, where all the stars  
were out.

As if an urgent heat had started there  
A secret writing from a sombre page,  
A blank, last moment, crowded suddenly  
With hurrying splendours.

'Then you do not know'—  
He murmured.

'Yes, I know,' I said, 'I know.  
I had the news from Vincent Carrington.  
And yet I did not think you'd leave the  
work  
In England, for so much even,—though  
of course  
You'll make a work-day of your holiday,  
And turn it to our Tuscan people's  
use,—

Who much need helping since the  
Austrian boar  
(So bold to cross the Alp to Lombardy  
And dash his brute front unabashed  
against

The steep snow-bosses of that shield of  
God

Who soon shall rise in wrath and shake  
it clear),  
Came hither also, raking up our grape  
And olive-gardens with his tyrannous  
tusk,  
And rolling on our maize with all his  
swine.'

'You had the news from Vincent  
Carrington,'  
He echoed,—picking up the phrase  
beyond,

As if he knew the rest was merely talk  
To fill a gap and keep out a strong  
wind;

'You had, then, Vincent's personal  
news?'

'His own,'

I answered. 'All that ruined world of  
yours

Seems crumbling into marriage. Car-  
rington  
Has chosen wisely.'

'Do you take it so?'  
He cried, 'and is it possible at last' . .  
He paused there,—and then, inward to  
himself,

'Too much at last, too late!—yet  
certainly' . .

(And there his voice swayed as an  
Alpine plank

That feels a passionate torrent under-  
neath)

'The knowledge, had I known it first  
or last,

Could scarce have changed the actual  
case for *me*.

And best for *her* at this time.'

Nay, I thought,  
He loves Kate Ward, it seems, now,  
like a man,

Because he has married Lady Waldemar!  
Ah, Vincent's letter said how Leigh  
was moved

To hear that Vincent was betrothed to  
Kate.

With what cracked pitchers go we to  
deep wells

In this world! Then I spoke,—'I did  
not think,

My cousin, you had ever known Kate  
Ward.'

'In fact I never knew her. 'Tis enough  
That Vincent did, and therefore chose  
his wife

For other reasons than those topaz eyes  
We've heard of. Not to undervalue them,  
For all that. One takes up the world  
with eyes.'

—Including Romney Leigh, I thought  
again,

Albeit he knows them only by repute.  
How vile must all men be, since *he's*  
a man.

His deep pathetic voice, as if he guessed  
I did not surely love him, took the word;  
'You never got a letter from Lord Howe  
A month back, dear Aurora!'

'None,' I said.

'I felt it was so,' he replied: 'yet,  
strange!

Sir Blaise Delorme has passed through  
Florence!'

'Aye,  
By chance I saw him in Our Lady's  
church

(I saw him, mark you, but he saw not me),  
Clean-washed in holy water from the  
count

Of things terrestrial,—letters, and the  
rest;

He had crossed us out together with  
his sins.

Aye, strange; but only strange that good  
 Lord Howe  
 Preferred him to the post because of  
 pauls.  
 For me I'm sworn to never trust a man—  
 At least with letters.'

'There were facts to tell.  
 To smooth with eye and accent. Howe  
 supposed . .  
 Well, well, no matter! there was dubious  
 need;  
 You heard the news from Vincent  
 Carrington.  
 And yet perhaps you had been startled  
 less  
 To see me, dear Aurora, if you had read  
 That letter.'

—Now he sets me down as vexed.  
 I think I've draped myself in woman's  
 pride  
 To a perfect purpose. Oh, I'm vexed,  
 it seems!  
 My friend Lord Howe deposes his friend  
 Sir Blaise  
 To break as softly as a sparrow's egg  
 That lets a bird tenderly, the news  
 Of Romney's marriage to a certain saint;  
 To *smooth with eye and accent*,—indicate  
 His possible presence. Excellently well  
 You've played your part, my Lady  
 Waldemar,—  
 As I've played mine.

'Dear Romney,' I began,  
 'You did not use, of old, to be so like  
 A Greek king coming from a taken Troy,  
 'Twas needful that precursors spread  
 your path  
 With three-piled carpets, to receive your  
 foot  
 And dull the sound of 't. For myself,  
 be sure,  
 Although it frankly grinds the gravel here,  
 I still can bear it. Yet I'm sorry too  
 To lose this famous letter, which Sir  
 Blaise  
 Has twisted to a lighter absently  
 To fire some holy taper: dear Lord Howe  
 Writes letters good for all things but to  
 lose;  
 And many a flower of London gossipry  
 Has dropped wherever such a stem broke  
 off.

Of course I feel that, lonely among my  
 vines,  
 Where nothing's talked of, save the  
 blight again,  
 And no more Chianti! Still the letter's use  
 As preparation . . Did I start indeed?  
 Last night I started at a cockchafer,  
 And shook a half-hour after. Have you  
 learnt

No more of women, 'spite of privilege,  
 Than still to take account too seriously  
 Of such weak flutterings? Why, we  
 like it, sir,  
 We get our powers and our effects that  
 way:

The trees stand stiff and still at time of  
 frost,  
 If no wind tears them; but, let summer  
 come,  
 When trees are happy,—and a breath  
 avails  
 To set them trembling through a million  
 leaves  
 In luxury of emotion. Something less  
 It takes to move a woman: let her start  
 And shake at pleasure,—nor conclude at  
 yours,  
 The winter's bitter,—but the summer's  
 green.'

He answered, 'Be the summer evergreen  
 With you, Aurora!—though you sweep  
 your sex  
 With somewhat bitter gusts from where  
 you live  
 Above them,—whirling downward from  
 your heights  
 Your very own pine-cones, in a grand  
 disdain  
 Of the lowland burrs with which you  
 scatter them.

So high and cold to others and yourself,  
 A little less to Romney were unjust,  
 And thus, I would not have you. Let  
 it pass:  
 I feel content so. You can bear indeed  
 My sudden step beside you: but for me,  
 'Twould move me sore to hear your  
 softened voice,—  
 Aurora's voice,—if softened unaware  
 In pity of what I am.'

Ah, friend, I thought,  
 As husband of the Lady Waldemar

You're granted very sorely pitiable!  
And yet Aurora Leigh must guard her  
voice

From softening in the pity of your case,  
As if from lie or licence. Certainly  
We'll soak up all the slush and soil of  
life  
With softened voices, ere we come to  
*you*.

At which I interrupted my own thought  
And spoke out calmly. 'Let us ponder,  
friend,

Whate'er our state we must have made  
it first;

And though the thing displease us, aye,  
perhaps

Displease us warrantably, never doubt  
That other states, thought possible once,  
and then

Rejected by the instinct of our lives,  
If then adopted had displeased us more  
Than this in which the choice, the will,  
the love,

Has stamped the honour of a patent act  
From henceforth. What we choose  
may not be good,

But, that we choose it, proves it good  
for *us*

Potentially, fantastically, now  
Or last year, rather than a thing we  
saw,

And saw no need for choosing. Moths  
will burn

Their wings,—which proves that light is  
good for moths,

Who else had flown not where they  
agonize.'

'Aye, light is good,' he echoed, and there  
paused;

And then abruptly, .. 'Marian. Marian's  
well?'

I bowed my head but found no word.  
'Twas hard

To speak of *her* to Lady Waldemar's  
New husband. How much did he know,  
at last?

How much? how little?—He would  
take no sign,

But straight repeated,—'Marian. Is  
she well?'

'She's well,' I answered.

She was there in sight  
An hour back, but the night had drawn  
her home,

Where still I heard her in an upper room,  
Her low voice singing to the child in bed,  
Who restless with the summer-heat and  
play

And slumber snatched at noon, was long  
sometimes

In falling off, and took a score of songs  
And mother-hushes ere she saw him  
sound.

'She's well,' I answered.

'Here?' he asked.

'Yes, here.'

He stopped and sighed. 'That shall be  
presently,

But now this must be. I have words to  
say,

And would be alone to say them, I with  
you,

And no third troubling.'

'Speak then,' I returned,

'She will not vex you.'

At which, suddenly,  
He turned his face upon me with its smile  
As if to crush me. 'I have read your  
book,

Aurora.'

'You have read it, I replied,  
'And I have writ it,—we have done  
with it.

And now the rest?'

'The rest is like the first,'  
He answered,—'for the book is in my  
heart,

Lives in me, wakes in me, and dreams  
in me:

My daily bread tastes of it,—and my wine  
Which has no smack of it, I pour it out,  
It seems unnatural drinking.'

Bitterly  
I took the word up; 'Never waste your  
wine.

The book lived in me ere it lived in you;  
I know it closer than another does,

And how it's foolish, feeble, and afraid,  
And all unworthy so much compliment.

Beseech you, keep your wine,—and,  
when you drink,  
Still wish some happier fortune to a  
friend,  
Than even to have written a far better  
book.'

He answered gently, 'That is consequent :

The poet looks beyond the book he has made,

Or else he had not made it. If a man  
Could make a man, he'd henceforth be  
a god

In feeling what a little thing is man :  
It is not my case. And this special book,  
I did not make it, to make light of it :  
It stands above my knowledge, draws  
me up ;

'Tis high to me. It may be that the book  
Is not so high, but I so low, instead ;  
Still high to me. I mean no compliment :  
I will not say there are not, young or old,  
Male writers, aye, or female, let it pass,  
Who'll write us richer and completer  
books.

A man may love a woman perfectly,  
And yet by no means ignorantly maintain  
A thousand women have not larger eyes :  
Enough that she alone has looked at him  
With eyes that, large or small, have won  
his soul.

And so, this book, Aurora,—so, your  
book.'

'Alas,' I answered, 'is it so, indeed ?'  
And then was silent.

'Is it so, indeed,'  
He echoed, 'that *alas* is all your word ?'  
I said,—'I'm thinking of a far-off June,  
When you and I, upon my birthday once,  
Discours'd of life and art, with both  
untried.

I'm thinking, Romney, how 'twas  
morning then,  
And now 'tis night.'

'And now,' he said, 'tis night.'

'I'm thinking,' I resumed, 'tis somewhat sad,  
That if I had known, that morning in  
the dew,

My cousin Romney would have said  
such words

On such a night at close of many years,  
In speaking of a future book of mine,  
It would have pleased me better as a hope,  
Than as an actual grace it can at all :  
That's sad, I'm thinking.'

'Aye,' he said, 'tis night.'

'And there,' I added lightly, 'are the  
stars !

And here, we'll talk of stars and not of  
books.'

'You have the stars,' he murmured,—  
'it is well :

Be like them ! shine, Aurora, on my dark,  
Though high and cold and only like a star,  
And for this short night only,—you,  
who keep

The same Aurora of the bright June day  
That withered up the flowers before my  
face,

And turned me from the garden evermore  
Because I was not worthy. Oh, de-  
served,

Deserved ! that I, who verily had not  
learnt

God's lesson half, attaining as a dunce  
To obliterate good words with fractious  
thumbs

And cheat myself of the context,—I  
should push

Aside, with male ferocious impudence,  
The world's Aurora who had conned  
her part

On the other side the leaf ! ignore her so,  
Because she was a woman and a queen,  
And had no beard to bristle through her  
song,

My teacher, who has taught me with a  
book,

My Miriam, whose sweet mouth, when  
nearly drowned

I still heard singing on the shore ! De-  
served,

That here I should look up into the stars  
And miss the glory' . .

'Can I understand ?'

I broke in. 'You speak wildly, Romney  
Leigh,

Or I hear wildly. In that morning-time  
We recollect, the roses were too red,

The trees too green, reproach too natural  
If one should see not what the other saw :  
And now, it's night, remember ; we have  
shades

In place of colours ; we are now grown  
cold,  
And old, my cousin Romney. Pardon  
me,—

I'm very happy that you like my book,  
And very sorry that I quoted back  
A ten years' birthday. 'Twas so mad  
a thing

In any woman, I scarce marvel much  
You took it for a venturous piece of spite,  
Provoking such excuses as indeed  
I cannot call you slack in.'

'Understand,'

He answered sadly, 'something, if but so.  
This night is softer than an English day,  
And men may well come hither when  
they're sick,

To draw in easier breath from larger air.  
'Tis thus with me ; I come to you,—to  
you,

My Italy of women, just to breathe  
My soul out once before you, ere I go,  
As humble as God makes me at the last  
(I thank Him), quite out of the way of men  
And yours, Aurora,—like a punished  
child,

His cheeks all blurred with tears and  
naughtiness,

To silence in a corner. I am come  
To speak, beloved' . .

'Wisely, cousin Leigh,  
And worthily of us both!'

'Yes, worthily ;

For this time I must speak out and confess  
That I, so truculent in assumption once,  
So absolute in dogma, proud in aim,  
And fierce in expectation,—I, who felt  
The whole world tugging at my skirts  
for help,

As if no other man than I, could pull,  
Nor woman, but I led her by the hand,  
Nor cloth hold, but I had it in my coat,  
Do know myself to-night for what I was  
On that June-day, Aurora. Poor bright  
day,

Which meant the best . . a woman and  
a rose,

And which I smote upon the cheek with  
words

Until it turned and rent me ! Young  
you were,  
That birthday, poet, but you talked the  
right :

While I, . . I built up follies like a wall  
To intercept the sunshine and your face.  
Your face ! that's worse.'

'Speak wisely, cousin Leigh.'

'Yes, wisely, dear Aurora, though too  
late :

But then, not wisely. I was heavy then,  
And stupid, and distracted with the cries  
Of tortured prisoners in the polished brass  
Of that Phalarian bull, society,  
Which seems to bellow bravely like ten  
bulls

But, if you listen, moans and cries instead  
Despairingly, like victims tossed and  
gored

And trampled by their hoofs. I heard  
the cries

Too close : I could not hear the angels  
lift

A fold of rustling air, nor what they said  
To help my pity. I beheld the world  
As one great famishing carnivorous  
mouth,—

A huge, deserted, callow, blind bird  
Thing,

With piteous open beak that hurt my  
heart,

Till down upon the filthy ground I  
dropped,

And tore the violets up to get the worms.  
Worms, worms, was all my cry : an  
open mouth,

A gross want, bread to fill it to the lips,  
No more. That poor men narrowed  
their demands

To such an end, was virtue, I supposed,  
Adjudicating that to see it so

Was reason. Oh, I did not push the case  
Up higher, and ponder how it answers  
when

The rich take up the same cry for them-  
selves,

Professing equally,—“An open mouth,  
A gross need, food to fill us, and no more.”

Why that's so far from virtue, only vice  
Can find excuse for 't ! that makes  
libertines,

And slurs our cruel streets from end to end

With eighty thousand women in one smile,  
 Who only smile at night beneath the gas.  
 The body's satisfaction and no more,  
 Is used for argument against the soul's,  
 Here too; the want, here too, implies the right.  
 —How dark I stood that morning in the sun,  
 My best Aurora (though I saw your eyes),  
 When first you told me . . oh, I recollect  
 The sound, and how you lifted your small hand,  
 And how your white dress and your burnished curls  
 Went greatening round you in the still blue air,  
 As if an inspiration from within  
 Had blown them all out when you spoke the words,  
 Even these,—“You will not compass your poor ends  
 Of barley-feeding and material ease,  
 Without the poet's individualism  
 To work your universal. It takes a soul,  
 To move a body,—it takes a high-souled man,  
 To move the masses, even to a cleaner sty :  
 It takes the ideal, to blow an inch inside  
 The dust of the actual: and your Fouriers failed,  
 Because not poets enough to understand  
 That life develops from within.” I say  
 Your words,—I could say other words of yours,  
 For none of all your words will let me go;  
 Like sweet verbenas which, being brushed against,  
 Will hold us three hours after by the smell  
 In spite of long walks upon windy hills.  
 But these words dealt in sharper perfume,—these  
 Were ever on me, stinging through my dreams,  
 And saying themselves for ever o'er my acts  
 Like some unhappy verdict. That I failed,  
 Is certain. Sty or no sty, to contrive  
 The swine's propulsion toward the precipice,

Proved easy and plain. I subtly organized  
 And ordered, built the cards up high and higher,  
 Till, some one breathing, all fell flat again;  
 In setting right society's wide wrong,  
 Mere life's so fatal. So I failed indeed,  
 Once, twice, and oftener,—hearing through the rents  
 Of obstinate purpose, still those words of yours,  
 “*You will not compass your poor ends, not you!*”  
 But harder than you said them; every time  
 Still farther from your voice, until they came  
 To overerow me with triumphant scorn  
 Which vexed me to resistance. Set down this  
 For condemnation,—I was guilty here; I stood upon my deed and fought my doubt,  
 As men will,—for I doubted,—till at last  
 My deed gave way beneath me suddenly  
 And left me what I am:—the curtain dropped,  
 My part quite ended, all the footlights quenched,  
 My own soul hissing at me through the dark,  
 I ready for confession,—I was wrong,  
 I've sorely failed, I've slipped the ends of life,  
 I yield, you have conquered.’  
 ‘Stay,’ I answered him;  
 ‘I've something for your hearing, also. I have failed too.’  
 ‘You!’ he said, ‘you're very great;  
 The sadness of your greatness fits you well :  
 As if the plume upon a hero's casque  
 Should nod a shadow upon his victor face.’  
 I took him up austere, —‘You have read  
 My book, but not my heart; for recollect,  
 ‘Tis writ in Sanscrit which you bungle at.  
 I've surely failed, I know, if failure means

To look back sadly on work gladly  
done,—  
To wander on my mountains of Delight,  
So called (I can remember a friend's  
words  
As well as you, sir), weary and in want  
Of even a sheep-path, thinking bitterly . .  
Well, well! no matter. I but say so  
much,  
To keep you, Romney Leigh, from  
saying more,  
And let you feel I am not so high indeed;  
That I can bear to have you at my foot,—  
Or safe, that I can help you. That  
June-day,  
Too deeply sunk in craterous sunsets now  
For you or me to dig it up alive,—  
To pluck it out all bleeding with spent  
flame  
At the roots, before those moralizing  
stars  
We have got instead,—that poor lost  
day, you said  
Some words as truthful as the thing of  
mine  
You cared to keep in memory; and  
I hold  
If I, that day, and, being the girl I was,  
Had shown a gentler spirit, less  
arrogance,  
It had not hurt me. You will scarce  
mistake  
The point here: I but only think, you see,  
More justly, that's more humbly, of  
myself,  
Than when I tried a crown on and  
supposed . .  
Nay, laugh, sir,—I'll laugh with you!—  
pray you, laugh.  
I've had so many birthdays since that day  
I've learnt to prize mirth's opportunities,  
Which come too seldom. Was it you  
who said  
I was not changed? the same Aurora? Ah,  
We could laugh there, too! Why,  
Ulysses' dog  
Knew *him*, and wagged his tail and  
died: but if  
I had owned a dog, I too, before my Troy,  
And if you brought him here, . . I  
warrant you  
He'd look into my face, bark lustily,  
And live on stoutly, as the creatures will

Whose spirits are not troubled by long  
loves.  
A dog would never know me, I'm so  
changed,  
Much less a friend . . except that you're  
misled  
By the colour of the hair, the trick of  
the voice,  
Like that Aurora Leigh's.  
'Sweet trick of voice!  
I would be a dog for this, to know it at last,  
And die upon the falls of it. O love,  
O best Aurora! are you then so sad  
You scarcely had been sadder as my wife?'  
'Your wife, sir! I must certainly be  
changed,  
If I, Aurora, can have said a thing  
So light, it catches at the knightly spurs  
Of a noble gentleman like Romney Leigh  
And trips him from his honourable sense  
Of what befits' . .  
'You wholly misconceive,'  
He answered.  
I returned,—'I'm glad of it.  
But keep from misconception, too,  
yourself:  
I am not humbled to so low a point,  
Nor so far saddened. If I am sad at all,  
Ten layers of birthdays on a woman's  
head  
Are apt to fossilize her girlish mirth,  
Though ne'er so merry: I'm perforce  
more wise,  
And that, in truth, means sadder. For  
the rest,  
Look here, sir: I was right upon the  
whole  
That birthday morning. 'Tis impossible  
To get at men excepting through their  
souls,  
However open their carnivorous jaws;  
And poets get directlier at the soul,  
Than any of your economists:—for which  
You must not overlook the poet's work  
When scheming for the world's ne-  
cessities.  
The soul's the way. Not even Christ  
Himself  
Can save man else than as He holds  
man's soul;  
And therefore did He come into our  
flesh,

As some wise hunter creeping on his  
 knees  
 With a torch, into the blackness of  
 a cave,  
 To face and quell the beast there,—take  
 the soul,  
 And so possess the whole man, body  
 and soul.  
 I said, so far, right, yes; not farther,  
 though:  
 We both were wrong that June-day,—  
 both as wrong  
 As an east wind had been. I who  
 talked of art,  
 And you who grieved for all men's  
 griefs . . what then?  
 We surely made too small a part for  
 God  
 In these things. What we are, imports  
 us more  
 Than what we eat; and life, you've  
 granted me,  
 Develops from within. But innermost  
 Of the inmost, most interior of the interne,  
 God claims His own, Divine humanity  
 Renewing nature,—or the piercingest  
 verse,  
 Pressed in by subtlest poet, still must keep  
 As much upon the outside of a man  
 As the very bowl in which he dips his  
 beard.  
 —And then, . . the rest; I cannot  
 surely speak:  
 Perhaps I doubt more than you doubted  
 then,  
 If I, the poet's veritable charge,  
 Have borne upon my forehead. If I have,  
 It might feel somewhat liker to a crown,  
 The foolish green one even.—Ah.  
 I think,  
 And chiefly when the sun shines, that  
 I've failed.  
 But what then, Romney? Though we  
 fail indeed,  
 You . . I . . a score of such weak  
 workers, . . He  
 Fails never. If He cannot work by us,  
 He will work over us. Does He want  
 a man,  
 Much less a woman, think you? Every  
 time  
 The star winks there, so many souls  
 are born,

Who all shall work too. Let our own  
 be calm.  
 We should be ashamed to sit beneath  
 those stars,  
 Impatient that we're nothing.'  
 'Could we sit  
 Just so for ever, sweetest friend,' he said,  
 'My failure would seem better than  
 success.  
 And yet indeed your book has dealt with  
 me  
 More gently, cousin, than you ever will!  
 Your book brought down entire the  
 bright June-day,  
 And set me wandering in the garden-  
 walks,  
 And let me watch the garland in a place  
 You blushed so . . nay, forgive me, do  
 not stir,—  
 I only thank the book for what it taught,  
 And what permitted. Poet, doubt your-  
 self,  
 But never doubt that you're a poet to me  
 From henceforth. You have written  
 poems, sweet,  
 Which moved me in secret, as the sap is  
 moved  
 In still March-branches, signless as a  
 stone:  
 But this last book o'ercame me like soft  
 rain  
 Which falls at midnight, when the tight-  
 ened bark  
 Breaks out into unhesitating buds  
 And sudden protestations of the spring.  
 In all your other books, I saw but *you*:  
 A man may see the moon so, in a pond,  
 And not be nearer therefore to the moon,  
 Nor use the sight . . except to drown  
 himself:  
 And so I forced my heart back from the  
 sight,  
 For what had I, I thought, to do with *her*,  
 Aurora . . Romney? But, in this last book,  
 You showed me something separate from  
 . . yourself,  
 Beyond you, and I bore to take it in  
 And let it draw me. You have shown  
 me truths,  
 O June-day friend, that help me now at  
 night  
 When June is over! truths not yours,  
 indeed,

But set within my reach by means of you,  
 Presented by your voice and veise the  
     way  
 To take them clearest. Verily I was  
     wrong;  
 And verily many thinkers of this age,  
 Aye, many Christian teachers, half in  
     heaven,  
 Are wrong in just my sense who under-  
     stood.  
 Our natural world too insularly, as if  
 No spiritual counterpart completed it,  
 Consummating its meaning, rounding all  
 To justice and perfection, line by line,  
 Form by form, nothing single nor alone,  
 The great below clenched by the great  
     above,  
 Shade here authenticating substance  
     there,  
 The body proving spirit, as the effect  
 The cause: we meantime being too  
     grossly apt  
 To hold the natural, as dogs a bone  
 (Though reason and nature beat us in  
     the face),  
 So obstinately, that we'll break our teeth  
 Or ever we let go. For everywhere  
 We're too materialistic,—eating clay  
 (Like men of the west) instead of Adam's  
     corn  
 And Noah's wine, clay by handfuls, clay  
     by lumps,  
 Until we're filled up to the throat with  
     clay,  
 And grow the grimy colour of the ground  
 On which we are feeding. Aye,  
     materialist  
 The age's name is. God Himself, with  
     some,  
 Is apprehended as the bare result  
 Of what His hand materially has made,  
 Expressed in such an algebraic sign  
 Called God;—that is, to put it otherwise.  
 They add up nature to a nought of God  
 And cross the quotient. There are many  
     even,  
 Whose names are written in the Chris-  
     tian church  
 To no dishonour, diet still on mud  
 And splash the altars with it. You might  
     think  
 The clay, Christ laid upon their eyelids  
     when,

Still blind, He called them to the use of  
     sight,  
 Remained there to retard its exercise  
 With clogging incrustations. Close to  
     heaven,  
 They see for mysteries, through the  
     open doors,  
 Vague puffs of smoke from pots of  
     earthenware;  
 And fain would enter, when their time  
     shall come,  
 With quite another body than Saint Paul  
 Has promised,—husk and chaff, the  
     whole barley-corn,  
 Or where's the resurrection?'  
     'Thus it is,'  
 I sighed. And he resumed with mourn-  
     ful face:  
 'Beginning so, and filling up with clay  
 The wards of this great key, the natural  
     world,  
 And fumbling vainly therefore at the lock  
 Of the spiritual, we feel ourselves shut in  
 With all the wild-beast roar of struggling  
     life,  
 The terrors and compunctions of our  
     souls,  
 As saints with lions,—we who are not  
     saints,  
 And have no heavenly lordship in our  
     stare  
 To awe them backward. Aye, we are  
     forced, so pent,  
 To judge the whole too partially, . .  
     confound  
 Conclusions. Is there any common  
     phrase  
 Significant, with the adverb heard alone,  
 The verb being absent, and the pronoun  
     out?  
 But we, distracted in the roar of life,  
 Still insolently at God's adverb snatch,  
 And bruit against Him that His thought  
     is void,  
 His meaning hopeless,—cry, that every-  
     where  
 The government is slipping from His hand,  
 Unless some other Christ (say Romney  
     Leigh)  
 Come up and toil and moil and change  
     the world,  
 Because the First has proved inadequate,  
 However we talk bigly of His work

And piously of His person. We blas-  
pheme  
At last, to finish our doxology,  
Despairing on the earth for which He  
died.'

'So now,' I asked, 'you have more hope  
of men?'

'I hope,' he answered. 'I am come to  
think  
That God will have His work done, as  
you said,  
And that we need not be disturbed too  
much

For Romney Leigh or others having failed  
With this or that quack nostrum,—recipes  
For keeping summits by annulling depths,  
For wrestling with luxurious lounging  
sleeves,

And acting heroism without a scratch.  
We fail,—what then? Aurora, if I smiled  
To see you, in your lovely morning-pride,  
Try on the poet's wreath which suits the  
noon

(Sweet cousin, walls must get the  
weather-stain

Before they grow the ivy !), certainly  
I stood myself there worthier of contempt,  
Self-rated, in disastrous arrogance,  
As competent to sorrow for mankind  
And even their odds. A man may well  
despair,

Who counts himself so needful to success.  
I failed: I throw the remedy back on God,  
And sit down here beside you, in good  
hope.'

'And yet take heed,' I answered, 'lest  
we lean

Too dangerously on the other side,  
And so fail twice. Be sure, no earnest  
work

Of any honest creature, howbeit weak,  
Imperfect, ill-adapted, fails so much,  
It is not gathered as a grain of sand  
To enlarge the sum of human action used  
For carrying out God's end. No creature  
works

So ill, observe, that therefore he's  
cashiered.

The honest earnest man must stand and  
work,

The woman also,—otherwise she drops  
At once below the dignity of man,  
Accepting serfdom. Free men freely  
work.

'Whoever fears God, fears to sit at ease.'

He cried, 'True. After Adam, work was  
curse;

The natural creature labours, sweats,  
and frets.

But, after Christ, work turns to privilege,  
And henceforth, one with our humanity,  
The Six-day Worker working still in us  
Has called us freely to work on with  
Him

In high companionship. So, happiest!  
I count that Heaven itself is only work  
To a surer issue. Let us work, indeed,  
But no more work as Adam,—nor as  
Leigh

Erewhile, as if the only man on earth,  
Responsible for all the thistles blown  
And tigers couchant, struggling in amaze  
Against disease and winter, snarling on  
For ever, that the world's not paradise.  
Oh, cousin, let us be content, in work,  
To do the thing we can, and not presume  
To fret because it's little. 'Twill employ  
Seven men, they say, to make a perfect  
pin;

Who makes the head, content to miss  
the point,

Who makes the point, agreed to leave  
the join :

And if a man should cry, "I want a pin,  
And I must make it straightway, head  
and point,"

His wisdom is not worth the pin he wants.  
Seven men to a pin,—and not a man too  
much!

Seven generations, haply, to this world,  
To right it visibly a finger's breadth,  
And mend its rents a little. Oh, to storm  
And say, "This world here is intolerable;  
I will not eat this corn, nor drink this  
wine,

Nor love this woman, flinging her my soul  
Without a bond for 't as a lover should,  
Nor use the generous leave of happiness  
As not too good for using generously"—  
(Since virtue kindles at the touch of joy  
Like a man's cheek laid on a woman's  
hand,

And God, who knows it, looks for quick  
returns  
From joys)—to stand and claim to have  
a life  
Beyond the bounds of the individual man,  
And raze all personal cloisters of the soul  
To build up public stores and magazines,  
As if God's creatures otherwise were  
lost,  
The builder surely saved by any means!  
To think,—I have a pattern on my nail,  
And I will carve the world new after it  
And solve so these hard social questions,  
—nay,  
Impossible social questions, since their  
roots  
Strike deep in Evil's own existence here  
Which God permits because the ques-  
tion's hard  
To abolish evil nor attain free-will.  
Aye, hard to God, but not to Romney  
Leigh!  
For Romney has a pattern on his nail  
(Whatever may belack on the Mount),  
And, not being overnice to separate  
What's element from what's convention,  
hastes  
By line on line to draw you out a world,  
Without your help indeed, unless you  
take  
His yoke upon you and will learn of Him,  
So much He has to teach! so good a  
world!  
The same, the whole creation's groaning  
for!  
No rich nor poor, no gain nor loss nor  
stint;  
No potage in it able to exclude  
A brother's birthright, and no right of  
birth,  
The potage,—both secured to every man,  
And perfect virtue dealt out like the rest  
Gratuitously, with the soup at six,  
To whoso does not seek it.

'Softly, sir,'  
I interrupted,—'I had a cousin once  
I held in reverence. If he strained too  
wide,  
It was not to take honour but give help;  
The gesture was heroic. If his hand  
Accomplished nothing . . (well, it is not  
proved)  
That empty hand thrown impotently out

Were sooner caught, I think, by One in  
heaven,  
Than many a hand that reaped a harvest in  
And keeps the scythe's glow on it. Pray  
you, then,  
For my sake merely, use less bitterness  
In speaking of my cousin.'

'Ah,' he said,  
'Aurora! when the prophet beats the ass,  
The angel intercedes.' He shook his  
head—  
'And yet to mean so well and fail so foul,  
Expresses ne'er another beast than man;  
The antithesis is human. Harken, dear;  
There's too much abstract willing, pur-  
posing,  
In this poor world. We talk by aggre-  
gates,  
And think by systems, and, being used  
to face  
Our evils in statistics, are inclined  
To cap them with unreal remedies  
Drawn out in haste on the other side the  
slate.'

'That's true,' I answered, fain to throw  
up thought  
And make a game of 't,—'Yes, we  
generalize  
Enough to please you. If we pray at all,  
We pray no longer for our daily bread  
But next centenary's harvests. If we  
give,  
Our cup of water is not tendered till  
We lay down pipes and found a Company  
With Branches. Ass or angel, 'tis the  
same:  
A woman cannot do the thing she ought,  
Which means whatever perfect thing  
she can,  
In life, in art, in science, but she fears  
To let the perfect action take her part,  
And rest there: she must prove what  
she can do  
Before she does it, prate of woman's  
rights,  
Of woman's mission, woman's function,  
till  
The men (who are prating too on their  
side) cry,  
"A woman's function plainly is..to talk."  
Poor souls, they are very reasonably  
vexed;

They cannot hear each other talk.

‘And you,  
An artist, judge so?’

‘I, an artist,—yes :  
Because, precisely, I’m an artist, sir,  
And woman, if another sate in sight,  
I’d whisper,—Soft, my sister! not a word!  
By speaking we prove only we can speak,  
Which he, the man here, never doubted.  
What

He doubts is, whether we can *do* the thing  
With decent grace we’ve not yet done  
at all.

Now, do it; bring your statue,—you  
have room!

He’ll see it even by the starlight here;  
And if ’tis e’er so little like the god  
Who looks out from the marble silently  
Along the track of his own shining dart  
Through the dusk of ages, there’s no  
need to speak;

The universe shall henceforth speak for  
you,

And witness, “She who did this thing,  
was born

To do it,—claims her licence in her work.”  
And so with more works. Whoso cures

the plague,  
Though twice a woman, shall be called  
a leech :

Who rights a land’s finances, is excused  
For touching coppers, though her hands  
be white,—

But we, we talk!’

‘It is the age’s mood,’  
He said; ‘we boast, and do not. We  
put up

Hostelry signs where’er we lodge a day,  
Some red colossal cow with mighty paps  
A Cyclops’ fingers could not strain to  
milk,—

Then bring out presently our saucerful  
Of curds. We want more quiet in our  
works,

More knowledge of the bounds in which  
we work;

More knowledge that each individual man  
Remains an Adam to the general race,  
Constrained to see, like Adam, that he  
keep

His personal state’s condition honestly,  
Or vain all thoughts of his to help the  
world,

Which still must be developed from its *own*  
If bettered in its many. We indeed,  
Who think to lay it out new like a park,  
We take a work on us which is not man’s,  
For God alone sits far enough above  
To speculate so largely. None of us  
(Not Romney Leigh) is mad enough to  
say,

We’ll have a grove of oaks upon that slope  
And sink the need of acorns. Govern-  
ment,

If veritable and lawful, is not given  
By imposition of the foreign hand,  
Nor chosen from a pretty pattern-book  
Of some domestic idealogue who sits  
And coldly chooses empire, whereas well  
He might republic. Genuine government  
Is but the expression of a nation, good  
Or less good,—even as all society,  
Howe’er unequal, monstrous, crazed,  
and cursed,

Is but the expression of men’s single lives,  
The loud sum of the silent units. What,  
We’d change the aggregate and yet retain  
Each separate figure? whom do we cheat  
by that?

Now, not even Romney.’

‘Cousin, you are sad.  
Did all your social labour at Leigh Hall  
And elsewhere, come to nought then?’

‘It was nought,’  
He answered mildly. ‘There is room  
indeed

For statues still, in this large world of  
God’s,

But not for vacuums,—so I am not sad;  
Not sadder than is good for what I am.  
My vain phalanstery dissolved itself;  
My men and women of disordered lives,  
I brought in orderly to dine and sleep,  
Broke up those waxen masks I made  
them wear,

With fierce contortions of the natural  
face,—

And cursed me for my tyrannous con-  
straint

In forcing crooked creatures to live  
straight;

And set the country hounds upon my back  
To bite and tear me for my wicked deed  
Of trying to do good without the church  
Or even the squires, Aurora. Do you  
mind

Your ancient neighbours? The great  
book-club teems  
With "sketches," "summaries," and  
"last tracts" but twelve,  
On socialistic troublers of close bonds  
Betwixt the generous rich and grateful  
poor.  
The vicar preached from "Revelations"  
(till  
The doctor woke), and found me with  
"the frogs"  
On three successive Sundays; aye, and  
stopped  
To weep a little (for he's getting old)  
That such perdition should o'ertake a man  
Of such fair acres,—in the parish, too!  
He printed his discourses "by request,"  
And if your book shall sell as his did, then  
Your verses are less good than I suppose.  
The women of the neighbourhood sub-  
scribed,  
And sent me a copy bound in scarlet silk,  
Tooled edges, blazoned with the arms of  
Leigh:  
I own that touched me.'  
'What, the pretty ones?  
Poor Romney!'  
'Otherwise the effect was small:  
I had my windows broken once or twice  
By 'iberal peasants naturally incensed  
At such a vexer of Arcadian peace,  
Who would not let men call their wives  
their own  
To kick like Britons, and made obstacles  
When things went smoothly as a baby  
drugged,  
Toward freedom and starvation,—bring-  
ing down  
The wicked London tavern-thieves and  
drabs  
To affront the blessed hillside drabs and  
thieves  
With mended morals, quotha,—fine new  
lives!—  
My windows paid for 't. I was shot at,  
once,  
By an active poacher who had hit a hare  
From the other barrel (tired of springing  
game  
So long upon my acres, undisturbed,  
And restless for the country's virtue,—  
yet  
He missed me), aye, and pelted very oft

In riding through the village. "There  
he goes  
Who'd drive away our Christian gentle-  
folks,  
To catch us undefended in the trap  
He baits with poisonous cheese, and  
lock us up  
In that pernicious prison of Leigh Hall  
With all his murderers! Give another  
name  
And say Leigh Hell, and burn it up  
with fire."  
And so they did, at last, Aurora.'  
'Did?'  
'You never heard it, cousin! Vincent's  
news  
Came stinted, then.'  
'They did! they burnt Leigh Hall!'  
'You're sorry, dear Aurora! Yes in-  
deed,  
They did it perfectly: a thorough work,  
And not a failure, this time. Let us grant  
'Tis somewhat easier, though, to burn  
a house  
Than build a system;—yet that's easy,  
too,  
In a dream. Books, pictures,—aye, the  
pictures! what,  
You think your dear Vandykes would  
give them pause?  
Our proud ancestral Leighs, with those  
peaked beards,  
Or bosoms white as foam thrown up on  
rocks  
From the old-spent wave. Such calm  
defiant looks  
They flared up with! now nevermore  
to twit  
The bones in the family-vault with  
ugly death.  
Not one was rescued, save the Lady  
Maud,  
Who threw you down, that morning  
you were born,  
The undeniable lineal mouth and chin  
To wear for ever for her gracious sake,  
For which good deed I saved her; the  
rest went:  
And you, you're sorry, cousin. Well,  
for me,  
With all my phalansterians safely out

(Poor hearts, they helped the burners,  
it was said,  
And certainly a few clapped hands and  
yelled),  
The ruin did not hurt me as it might,—  
As when for instance I was hurt one day  
A certain letter being destroyed. In  
fact,  
To see the great house flare so . . . oaken  
floors,  
Our fathers made so fine with rushes  
once  
Before our mothers furnished them with  
trains,  
Carved wainscoats, panelled walls, the  
favourite slide  
For draining off a martyr (or a rogue),  
The echoing galleries, half a half-mile  
long,  
And all the various stairs that took you up  
And took you down, and took you round  
about  
Upon their slippery darkness, recollect,  
All helping to keep up one blazing jest!  
The flames through all the casements  
pushing forth  
Like red-hot devils crinkled into snakes,  
All signifying,—“Look you, Romney  
Leigh,  
We save the people from your saving,  
here,  
Yet so as by fire! we make a pretty show  
Besides,—and that’s the best you’ve  
ever done.”  
—To see this, almost moved myself to  
clap!  
The “*vale et plaudite*” came too with effect  
When, in the roof fell, and the fire that  
paused,  
Stunned momentarily beneath the stroke  
of slates  
And tumbling rafters, rose at once and  
roared,  
And wrapping the whole house (which  
disappeared  
In a mounting whirlwind of dilated flame),  
Blew upward, straight, its drift of fiery  
chaff  
In the face of Heaven, which blenched,  
and ran up higher.’

‘Poor Romney!’

‘Sometimes when I dream,’ he said,

‘I hear the silence after, ’twas so still.  
For all those wild beasts, yelling, cursing  
round,  
Were suddenly silent, while you counted  
five,  
So silent, that you heard a young bird fall  
From the top-nest in the neighbouring  
rookery,  
Through edging over-rashly toward the  
light.  
The old rooks had already fled too far,  
To hear the screech they fled with,  
though you saw  
Some flying still, like scatterings of dead  
leaves  
In autumn-gusts, seen dark against the  
sky,—  
All flying,—ousted, like the House of  
Leigh.’

‘Dear Romney!’

‘Evidently ’twould have been  
A fine sight for a poet, sweet, like you,  
To make the verse blaze after. I myself,  
Even I, felt something in the grand old  
trees,  
Which stood that moment like brute  
Druid gods  
Amazed upon the rim of ruin, where,  
As into a blackened socket, the great fire  
Had dropped,—still throwing up splinters  
now and then  
To show them grey with all their  
centuries,  
Left there to witness that on such a day  
The House went out.’

‘Ah!’

‘While you counted five,  
I seemed to feel a little like a Leigh,—  
But then it passed, Aurora. A child cried,  
And I had enough to think of what to do  
With all those houseless wretches in  
the dark,  
And ponder where they’d dance the  
next time, they  
Who had burnt the viol.’

‘Did you think of that?  
Who burns his viol will not dance, I know,  
To cymbals, Romney.’

‘O my sweet sad voice,’  
He cried,—‘O voice that speaks and  
overcomes!  
The sun is silent, but Aurora speaks.’

'Alas,' I said, 'I speak I know not what :  
I'm back in childhood, thinking as a child,  
A foolish fancy—will it make you smile?  
I shall not from the window of my room  
Catch sight of those old chimneys any  
more.'

'No more,' he answered. 'If you pushed  
one day  
Through all the green hills to our fathers'  
house,  
You'd come upon a great charred circle,  
where  
The patient earth was singed an acre  
round;  
With one stone-stair, symbolic of my  
life,  
Ascending, winding, leading up to  
nought!  
'Tis worth a poet's seeing. Will you go?'

I made no answer. Had I any right  
To weep with this man, that I dared to  
speak?  
A woman stood between his soul and  
mine,  
And waved us off from touching ever-  
more,  
With those unclean white hands of hers.  
Enough.  
We had burnt our viols and were silent.  
So,  
The silence lengthened till it pressed.  
I spoke,  
To breathe: 'I think you were ill after-  
ward.'

'More ill,' he answered, 'had been  
scarcely ill.  
I hoped this feeble fumbling at life's knot  
Might end concisely,—but I failed to die,  
As formerly I failed to live, and thus  
Grew willing, having tried all other ways,  
To try just God's. Humility's so good,  
When pride's impossible. Mark us, how  
we make  
Our virtues, cousin, from our worn-out  
sins,  
Which smack of them from henceforth.  
Is it right,  
For instance, to wed here while you  
love there?  
And yet because a man sins once, the sin

Cleaves to him, in necessity to sin,  
That if he sin not *so*, to damn himself;  
He sins *so*, to damn others with himself:  
And thus, to wed here, loving there,  
becomes

A duty. Virtue buds a dubious leaf  
Round mortal brows; your ivy's better,  
dear.

—Yet she, 'tis certain, is my very wife,  
The very lamb left mangled by the wolves  
Through my own bad shepherding: and  
could I choose  
But take her on my shoulder past this  
stretch  
Of rough, uneasy wilderness, poor lamb,  
Poor child, poor child?—Aurora, my  
beloved,

I will not vex you any more to-night,  
But, having spoken what I came to say,  
The rest shall please you. What she  
can, in me,—

Protection, tender liking, freedom, ease,  
She shall have surely, liberally, for her  
And hers, Aurora. Small amends they'll  
make

For hideous evils which she had not  
known

Except by me, and for this imminent loss,  
This forfeit presence of a gracious friend,  
Which also she must forfeit for my sake,  
Since, . . . drop your hand in mine  
a moment, sweet,

We're parting!—ah, my snowdrop,  
what a touch,

As if the wind had swept it off! you  
grudge

Your gelid sweetness on my palm but so,  
A moment? angry, that I could not bear  
You . . . speaking, breathing, living, side  
by side

With some one called my wife . . . and  
live, myself?

Nay, be not cruel—you must understand!  
Your lightest footfall on a floor of mine  
Would shake the house, my lintel being  
uncrossed

'Gainst angels: henceforth it is night  
with me,

And so, henceforth, I put the shutters up:  
Auroras must not come to spoil my dark.'

He smiled so feebly, with an empty  
hand

Stretched sideway from me,—as indeed  
he looked

To any one but me to give him help;  
And, while the moon came suddenly out  
full,

The double-rose of our Italian moons,  
Sufficient plainly for the heaven and  
earth

(The stars struck dumb and washed away  
in dew)

Of golden glory, and the mountains  
steeped

In divine languor), he, the man, appeared  
So pale and patient, like the marble man  
A sculptor puts his personal sadness in  
To join his grandeur of ideal thought,—  
As if his mallet struck me from my height  
Of passionate indignation, I who had  
risen

Pale, doubting paused, . . . Was Romney  
mad indeed?

Had all this wrong of heart made sick  
the brain?

Then quiet, with a sort of tremulous pride,  
'Go, cousin,' I said coldly; 'a farewell  
Was sooner spoken 'twixt a pair of  
friends

In those old days, than seems to suit  
you now.

Howbeit, since then, I've writ a book  
or two,

I'm somewhat dull still in the manly art  
Of phrase and metaphor. Why, any  
man

Can carve a score of white Loves out of  
snow,

As Buonarroti in my Florence there,  
And set them on the wall in some safe  
shade,

As safe, sir, as your marriage! very good;  
Though if a woman took one from the  
ledge

To put it on the table by her flowers  
And let it mind her of a certain friend,  
'T would drop at once (so better), would  
not bear

Her nail-mark even, where she took  
it up

A little tenderly,—so best, I say:  
For me, I would not touch the fragile  
thing

And risk to spoil it half an hour before

The sun shall shine to melt it: leave it  
there.

I'm plain at speech, direct in purpose:  
when

I speak, you'll take the meaning as it is,  
And not allow for puckerings in the silk  
By clever stitches:—I'm a woman, sir,  
I use the woman's figures naturally,  
As you the male licence. So, I wish  
you well.

I'm simply sorry for the griefs you've had,  
And not for your sake only, but man-  
kind's.

This race is never grateful: from the  
first,

One fills their cup at supper with pure  
wine,

Which back they give at cross-time on  
a sponge,

In vinegar and gall.'

'If graterfuller,'

He murmured, 'by so much less pitiable!  
God's self would never have come down  
to die,

Could man have thanked him for it.'

'Happily

'Tis patent that, whatever,' I resumed,  
'You suffered from this thanklessness of  
men,

You sink no more than Moses' bulrush-  
boat

When once relieved of Moses,—for  
you're light,

You're light, my cousin! which is well  
for you,

And manly. For myself,—now mark  
me, sir,

They burnt Leigh Hall; but if, consum-  
mated

To devils, heightened beyond Lucifers,  
They had burnt instead, a star or two  
of those

We saw above there just a moment back,  
Before the moon abolished them,—  
destroyed

And riddled them in ashes through a sieve  
On the head of the foundering universe,—  
what then?

If you and I remained still you and I,  
It could not shift our places as mere

friends,  
Nor render decent you should toss

a phrase

Beyond the point of actual feeling!—nay,  
You shall not interrupt me: as you said,  
We're parting. Certainly, not once nor  
twice

To-night you've mocked me somewhat,  
or yourself,

And I, at least, have not deserved it so  
That I should meet it unsurprised.

But now,

Enough: we're parting . . . parting.

Cousin Leigh,

I wish you well through all the acts of life  
And life's relations, wedlock not the least,  
And it shall "please me," in your words,  
to know

You yield your wife, protection, freedom,  
ease,

And very tender liking. May you live  
So happy with her, Romney, that your  
friends

Shall praise her for it. Meantime some  
of us

Are wholly dull in keeping ignorant  
Of what she has suffered by you, and  
what debt

Of sorrow your rich love sits down to pay:

But if 'tis sweet for love to pay its debt,

'Tis sweeter still for love to give its gift,

And you, be liberal in the sweeter way,

You can, I think. At least, as touches me,

You owe her, cousin Romney, no amends.

She is not used to hold my gown so fast;

You need entreat her now to let it go;

The lady never was a friend of mine,

Nor capable,—I thought you knew as  
much,—

Of losing for your sake so poor a prize

As such a worthless friendship. Be

content,

Good cousin, therefore, both for her  
and you!

I'll never spoil your dark, nor dull your  
noon,

Nor vex you when you're merry, or at  
rest:

You shall not need to put a shutter up

To keep out this Aurora,—though your

north

Can make Auroras which vex nobody,

Scarce known from night, I fancied! let

me add,

My larks fly higher than some windows.

Well,

You've read your Leighs. Indeed

'twould shake a house,

If such as I came in with outstretched  
hand

Still warm and thrilling from the clasp  
of one . . .

Of one we know, . . . to 'acknowledge,  
palm to palm,

As mistress there, the Lady Waldemar.'

'Now God be with us' . . . with a sudden  
clash

Of voice he interrupted—'what name's  
that?

You spoke a name, Aurora.'

'Pardon me;

I would that, Romney, I could name  
your wife

Nor wound you, yet be worthy.'

'Are we mad?'

He echoed—'wife! mine! Lady Wal-  
demar!

I think you said my wife.' He sprang  
to his feet,

And threw his noble head back toward  
the moon

As one who swims against a stormy sea;

Then laughed with such a helpless,  
hopeless, scorn,

I stood and trembled.

'May God judge me so,'

He said at last,—'I came convicted here,  
And humbled sorely if not enough.

I came,

Because this woman from her crystal  
soul

Had shown me something which a man  
calls light:

Because too, formerly, I sinned by her  
As then and ever since I have, by God,

Through arrogance of nature,—though  
I loved . . .

Whom best, I need not say, since that  
is writ

Too plainly in the book of my misdeeds:

And thus I came here to abase myself,

And fasten, kneeling, on her regent  
brows

A garland which I startled thence one  
day

Of her beautiful June-youth. But here  
again

I'm baffled,—fail in my abasement as

My aggrandizement : there's no room  
left for me

At any woman's foot who misconceives  
My nature, purpose, possible actions.  
What!

Are you the Aurora who made large  
my dreams

To frame your greatness? you conceive  
so small?

You stand so less than woman, through  
being more,

And lose your natural instinct (like  
a beast)

Through intellectual culture! since in-  
deed

I do not think that any common she  
Would dare adopt such monstrous  
forgeries

For the legible life-signature of such  
As I, with all my blots,—with all my  
blots!

At last then, peerless cousin, we are  
peers,

At last we're even. Ah, you've left  
your height,

And here upon my level we take hands,  
And here I reach you to forgive you,  
sweet,

And that's a fall, Aurora. Long ago  
You seldom understood me,—but before,

I could not blame you. Then, you only  
seemed

So high above, you could not see below;  
But now I breathe,—but now I pardon!—  
nay,

We're parting. Dearest, men have  
burnt my house,

Maligned my motives,—but not one,  
I swear,

Has wronged my soul as this Aurora  
has,

Who called the Lady Waldemar my  
wife.

'Not married to her! yet you said' . . .  
'Again?

Nay, read the lines' (he held a letter  
out)

'She sent you through me.'  
By the moonlight there,

I tore the meaning out with passionate  
haste

Much rather than I read it. Thus it ran.

## NINTH BOOK

EVEN thus. I pause to write it out at  
length,

The letter of the Lady Waldemar.

'I prayed your cousin Leigh to take you  
this,

He says he'll do it. After years of love,  
Or what is called so, when a woman frets  
And fools upon one string of a man's name,

And fingers it for ever till it breaks,—  
He may perhaps do for her such a thing,

And she accept it without detriment  
Although she should not love him any  
more.

And I, who do not love him, nor love you,  
Nor you, Aurora,—choose you shall  
repent

Your most ungracious letter and confess,  
Constrained by his convictions (he's  
convinced),

You've wronged me foully. Are you  
made so ill,

You woman—to impute such ill to me?  
We both had mothers,—lay in their  
bosom once.

And after all, I thank you, Aurora Leigh,  
For proving to myself that there are things  
I would not do,—not for my life, nor him,

Though something I have somewhat  
overdone,—

For instance, when I went to see the gods  
One morning on Olympus, with a step  
That shook the thunder from a certain  
cloud,

Committing myself vilely. Could I think,  
The Muse I pulled my heart out from  
my breast

To soften, had herself a sort of heart,  
And loved my mortal? He at least loved  
her,

I heard him say so,—'twas my recom-  
pense,

When, watching at his bedside fourteen  
days,

He broke out ever like a flame at whiles  
Between the heats of fever,—“Is it thou?  
Breathe closer, sweetest mouth!” and  
when at last

The fever gone, the wasted face extinct,

As if it irked him much to know me there,  
He said, "'Twas kind, 'twas good, 'twas  
womanly"

(And fifty praises to excuse no love),  
"But was the picture safe he had  
ventured for?"

And then, half wandering,—"*I* have  
loved her well,

Although she could not love me."—

"Say instead,"

I answered, "she does love you."—

'Twas my turn

To rave : I would have married him so  
changed,

Although the world had jeered me  
properly

For taking up with Cupid at his worst,  
The silver quiver worn off on his hair.

"No, no," he murmured, "no, she loves  
me not ;

Aurora Leigh does better : bring her book  
And read it softly, Lady Waldemar,  
Until I thank your friendship more for  
that

Than even for harder service." So I read  
Your book, Aurora, for an hour that day :  
I kept its pauses, marked its emphasis ;  
My voice, empaled upon its hooks of rime,  
Not once would writhe, nor quiver, nor  
revolt ;

I read on calmly,—calmly shut it up,  
Observing, "There's some merit in the  
book ;

And yet the merit in't is thrown away,  
As chances still with women if we write  
Or write not : we want string to tie our  
flowers,

So drop them as we walk, which serves  
to show

The way we went. Good morning,  
Mister Leigh ;

You'll find another reader the next time.  
A woman who does better than to love,  
I hate ; she will do nothing very well :  
Male poets are preferable, straining less  
And teaching more." I triumphed o'er  
you both,

And left him.

'When I saw him afterward  
I had read your shameful letter, and my  
heart.

He came with health recovered, strong  
though pale,

Lord Howe and he, a courteous pair of  
friends,

To say what men dare say to women,  
when

Their debtors. But I stopped them with  
a word,

And proved I had never trodden such  
a road

To carry so much dirt upon my shoe.  
Then, putting into it something of disdain,

I asked forsooth his pardon, and my own,  
For having done no better than to love,

And that not wisely,—though 'twas long  
ago,

And had been mended radically since.

I told him, as I tell you now, Miss Leigh,  
And proved, I took some trouble for his  
sake

(Because I knew he did not love the girl)  
To spoil my hands with working in the  
stream

Of that poor bubbling nature,—till she  
went,

Consigned to one I trusted, my own maid  
Who once had lived full five months in  
my house

(Dressed hair superbly), with a lavish  
purse

To carry to Australia where she had left  
A husband, said she. If the creature lied,  
The mission failed, we all do fail and lie  
More or less—and I'm sorry—which is all  
Expected from us when we fail the most  
And go to church to own it. What I meant,  
Was just the best for him, and me, and  
her . .

Best even for Marian !—I am sorry for 't,  
And very sorry. Yet my creature said  
She saw her stop to speak in Oxford Street  
To one . . no matter ! I had sooner cut  
My hand off (though 'twere kissed the  
hour before,

And promised a duke's troth-ring for the  
next)

Than crush her silly head with so much  
wrong.

Poor child ! I would have mended it with  
gold,

Until it gleamed like St. Sophia's dome  
When all the faithful troop to morning  
prayer :

But he, he nipped the bud of such a  
thought

With that cold Leigh look which I fancied  
 once,  
 And broke in, "Henceforth she was  
 called his wife:  
 His wife required no succour: he was  
 bound  
 To Florence, to resume this broken bond;  
 Enough so. Both were happy, he and  
 Howe,  
 To acquit me of the heaviest charge of  
 all—"—  
 —At which I shot my tongue against my  
 fly  
 And struck him; "Would he carry,—he  
 was just,  
 A letter from me to Aurora Leigh,  
 And ratify from his authentic mouth  
 My answer to her accusation?"—"Yes,  
 If such a letter were prepared in time."  
 —He's just, your cousin,—aye, abhor-  
 rently:  
 He'd wash his hands in blood, to keep  
 them clean.  
 And so, cold, courteous, a mere gentle-  
 man,  
 He bowed, we parted.  
 'Parted. Face no more,  
 Voice no more, love no more! wiped  
 wholly out  
 Like some ill scholar's scrawl from heart  
 and slate,—  
 Aye, spit on and so wiped out utterly  
 By some coarse scholar! I have been  
 too coarse,  
 Too human. Have we business, in our  
 rank,  
 With blood i' the veins! I will have  
 henceforth none,  
 Not even to keep the colour at my lip:  
 A rose is pink and pretty without blood,  
 Why not a woman? When we've played  
 in vain  
 The game, to adore,—we have resources  
 still,  
 And can play on at leisure, being adored:  
 Here's Smith already swearing at my feet  
 That I'm the typic She. Away with  
 Smith!—  
 Smith smacks of Leigh,—and henceforth  
 I'll admit  
 No socialist within three crinolines,  
 To live and have his being. But for you,  
 Though insolent your letter and absurd,

And though I hate you frankly,—take  
 my Smith!  
 For when you have seen this famous  
 marriage tied,  
 A most unspotted Erle to a noble Leigh  
 (His love astray on one he should not  
 love),  
 Howbeit you may not want his love, be-  
 ware,  
 You'll want some comfort. So I leave  
 you Smith,  
 Take Smith!—he talks Leigh's subjects,  
 somewhat worse;  
 Adopts a thought of Leigh's, and  
 dwindles it;  
 Goes leagues beyond, to be no inch be-  
 hind;  
 Will mind you of him, as a shoe-string may  
 Of a man: and women, when they are  
 made like you,  
 Grow tender to a shoe-string, footprint  
 even,  
 Adore averted shoulders in a glass,  
 And memories of what, present once,  
 was loathed.  
 And yet, you loathed not Romney,—  
 though you played  
 At "fox and goose" about him with  
 your soul;  
 Pass over fox, you rub out fox,—ignore  
 A feeling, you eradicate it,—the act's  
 Identical.  
 'I wish you joy, Miss Leigh;  
 You've made a happy marriage for your  
 friend,  
 And all the honour, well-assorted love,  
 Derives from you who love him, whom  
 he loves!  
 You need not wish *me* joy to think of it;  
 I have so much. Observe, Aurora Leigh,  
 Your droop of eyelid is the same as his,  
 And, but for you, I might have won his  
 love,  
 And, to you, I have shown my naked  
 heart;  
 For which three things, I hate, hate,  
 hate you. Hush,  
 Suppose a fourth!—I cannot choose but  
 think  
 That, with him, I were virtuouser than  
 you  
 Without him: so I hate you from this gulf  
 And hollow of my soul, which opens out

To what, except for you, had been my  
heaven,  
And is, instead, a place to curse by! Lovz.'

An active kind of curse. I stood there  
cursed,  
Confounded. I had seized and caught  
the sense

Of the letter, with its twenty stinging  
snakes,  
In a moment's sweep of eyesight, and  
I stood

Dazed.—'Ah! not married.'  
'You mistake,' he said,  
'I'm married. Is not Marian Erle my  
wife?

As God sees things, I have a wife and  
child;

And I, as I'm a man who honours God,  
Am here to claim them as my child and  
wife.'

I felt it hard to breathe, much less to  
speak.

Nor word of mine was needed. Some  
one else

Was there for answering. 'Romney,'  
she began,  
'My great good angel, Romney.'

Then at first,  
I knew that Marian Erle was beautiful.  
She stood there, still and pallid as a saint,  
Dilated, like a saint in ecstasy,  
As if the floating moonshine interposed  
Betwixt her foot and the earth, and raised  
her up

To float upon it. 'I had left my child,  
Whosleeps,' she said, 'and having drawn  
this way

I heard you speaking, . . friend!—Con-  
firm me now.

You take this Marian, such as wicked men  
Have made her, for your honourable  
wife?'

The thrilling, solemn, proud, pathetic  
voice.

He stretched his arms out toward that  
thrilling voice,

As if to draw it on to his embrace.

—'I take her as God made her, and as men  
Must fail to unmake her, for my honoured  
wife.'

She never raised hereyes, nor took a step,  
But stood there in her place, and spoke  
again.

—'You take this Marian's child, which  
is her shame

In sight of men and women, for your child,  
Of whom you will not ever feel ashamed?'

The thrilling, tender, proud, pathetic  
voice.

He stepped on toward it, still with out-  
stretched arms,

As if to quench upon his breast that voice.

—'May God so father me, as I do him,  
And so forsake me, as I let him feel  
He's orphaned haply. Here I take the  
child

To share my cup, to slumber on my knee,  
To play his loudest gambol at my foot,  
To hold my finger in the public ways,  
Till none shall need inquire, "Whose  
child is this?"

The gesture saying so tenderly, "My  
own,"

She stood a moment silent in her place;  
Then turning toward me very slow and  
cold,

—'And you,—what say you?—will you  
blame me much,

If, careful for that outcast child of mine,  
I catch this hand that's stretched to me  
and him,

Nor dare to leave him friendless in the  
world

Where men have stoned me? Have I  
not the right

To take so mere an aftermath from life,  
Else found so wholly bare? Or is it wrong

To let your cousin, for a generous bent,  
Put out his ungloved fingers among briars

To set a tumbling bird's-nest somewhat  
straight?

You will not tell him, though we're  
innocent,

We are not harmless, . . and that both  
our harms

Will stick to his good smooth noble life  
like burrs,

Never to drop off though he shakes the  
cloak?

You've been my friend: you will not  
now be his?

You've known him that he's worthy of  
 a friend,  
 And you're his cousin, lady, after all,  
 And therefore more than free to take his  
 part,  
 Explaining, since the nest is surely spoilt  
 And Marian what you know her,—though  
 a wife,  
 The world would hardly understand her  
 case  
 Of being just hurt and honest; while,  
 for him,  
 'Twould ever twit him with his bastard  
 child  
 And married harlot. Speak, while yet  
 there's time.  
 You would not stand and let a good man's  
 dog  
 Turn round and rend him, because his,  
 and reared  
 Of a generous breed,—and will you let  
 his act,  
 Because it's generous? Speak. I'm  
 bound to you,  
 And I'll be bound by only you, in this.'

The thrilling, solemn voice, so passionless,  
 Sustained, yet low, without a rise or fall,  
 As one who had authority to speak,  
 And not as Marian.

I looked up to feel  
 If God stood near me, and beheld His  
 heaven  
 As blue as Aaron's priestly robe appeared  
 To Aaron when he took it off to die.  
 And then I spoke—'Accept the gift, I say,  
 My sister Marian, and be satisfied.  
 The hand that gives, has still a soul behind  
 Which will not let it quail for having  
 given,  
 Though foolish worldlings talk they know  
 not what  
 Of what they know not. Romney's  
 strong enough  
 For this; do you be strong to know he's  
 strong:  
 He stands on Right's side; never flinch  
 for him,  
 As if he stood on the other. You'll be  
 bound  
 By me? I am a woman of repute;  
 No fly-blow gossip ever specked my life;  
 My name is clean and open as this hand,

Whose glove there's not a man dares  
 blab about  
 As if he had touched it freely. Here's  
 my hand  
 To clasp your hand, my Marian, owned  
 as pure!  
 As pure,—as I'm a woman and a Leigh!—  
 And, as I'm both, I'll witness to the  
 world  
 That Romney Leigh is honoured in his  
 choice  
 Who chooses Marian for his honoured  
 wife.'

Her broad wild woodland eyes shot out  
 a light,  
 Her smile was wonderful for rapture.  
 'Thanks,  
 My great Aurora.' Forward then she  
 sprang,  
 And dropping her impassioned spaniel  
 head  
 With all its brown abandonment of  
 curls  
 On Romney's feet, we heard the kisses  
 drawn  
 Through sob upon the foot, upon the  
 ground—  
 'O Romney! O my angel! O unchanged,  
 Though since we've parted I have past  
 the grave!  
 But Death itself could only better *thee*,  
 Not change thee!—*Thee* I do not thank  
 at all:  
 I but thank God who made thee what  
 thou art,  
 So wholly godlike.'

When he tried in vain  
 To raise her to his embrace, escaping  
 thence  
 As any leaping fawn from a huntsman's  
 grasp,  
 She bounded off and 'lighted beyond  
 reach,  
 Before him, with a staglike majesty  
 Of soft, serene defiance,—as she knew  
 He could not touch her, so was tolerant  
 He had cared to try. She stood there  
 with her great  
 Drowned eyes, and dripping cheeks, and  
 strange sweet smile  
 That lived through all, as if one held  
 a light

Across a waste of waters,—shook her  
 head  
 To keep some thoughts down deeper in  
 her soul,—  
 Then, white and tranquil like a summer-  
 cloud  
 Which, having rained itself to a tardy  
 peace,  
 Stands still in heaven as if it ruled the day,  
 Spoke out again—‘Although, my gener-  
 ous friend,  
 Since last we met and parted you’re  
 unchanged,  
 And, having promised faith to Marian  
 Erle,  
 Maintain it, as she were not changed at  
 all;  
 And though that’s worthy, though that’s  
 full of balm  
 To any conscious spirit of a girl  
 Who once has loved you as I loved you  
 once,—  
 Yet still it will not make her . . if she’s  
 dead,  
 And gone away where none can give or  
 take  
 In marriage,—able to revive, return  
 And wed you,—will it, Romney?  
 Here’s the point,  
 My friend, we’ll see it plainer : you and I  
 Must never, never, never join hands so.  
 Nay, let me say it,—for I said it first  
 To God, and placed it, rounded to an oath,  
 Far, far above the moon there, at His feet,  
 As surely as I wept just now at yours,—  
 We never, never, never join hands so.  
 And now, be patient with me ; do not  
 think  
 I’m speaking from a false humility.  
 The truth is, I am grown so proud with  
 grief,  
 And He has said so often through His  
 nights  
 And through His mornings, “Weep a  
 little still,  
 Thou foolish Marian, because women  
 must,  
 But do not blush at all except for sin,”—  
 That I, who felt myself unworthy once  
 Of virtuous Romney and his high-born  
 race,  
 Have come to learn,—a woman, poor or  
 rich,

Despised or honoured, is a human soul,  
 And what her soul is, that, she is herself,  
 Although she should be spit upon of men,  
 As is the pavement of the churches here,  
 Still good enough to pray in. And  
 being chaste  
 And honest, and inclined to do the right.  
 And love the truth, and live my life out  
 green  
 And smooth beneath his steps, I should  
 not fear  
 To make him thus a less uneasy time  
 Than many a happier woman. Very  
 proud  
 You see me. Pardon, that I set a trap  
 To hear a confirmation in your voice,  
 Both yours and yours. It is so good to  
 know  
 ‘Twas really God who said the same  
 before ;  
 And thus it is in heaven, that first God  
 speaks,  
 And then His angels. Oh, it does me  
 good,  
 It wipes me clean and sweet from devil’s  
 dirt,  
 That Romney Leigh should think me  
 worthy still  
 Of being his true and honourable wife !  
 Henceforth I need not say, on leaving  
 earth,  
 I had no glory in it. For the rest,  
 The reason’s ready (master, angel, friend,  
 Be patient with me) wherefore you and I  
 Can never, never, never join hands so  
 I know you’ll not be angry like a man  
 (For *you* are none) when I shall tell the  
 truth,  
 Which is, I do not love you, Romney  
 Leigh,  
 I do not love you. Ah well ! catch my  
 hands,  
 Miss Leigh, and burn into my eyes with  
 yours,—  
 I swear I do not love him. Did I once ?  
 ‘Tis said that women have been bruised  
 to death  
 And yet, if once they loved, that love of  
 theirs  
 Could never be drained out with all their  
 blood :  
 I’ve heard such things and pondered.  
 Did I indeed

Love once; or did I only worship? Yes,  
Perhaps, O friend, I set you up so high  
Above all actual good or hope of good  
Or fear of evil, all that could be mine,  
I haply set you above love itself,  
And out of reach of these poor woman's  
arms,

Angelic Romney. What was in my  
thought?

To be your slave, your help, your toy,  
your tool.

To be your love . . I never thought of that:  
To give you love . . still less. I gave  
you love?

I think I did not give you anything;  
I was but only yours,—upon my knees,  
All yours, in soul and body, in head and  
heart,

A creature you had taken from the ground  
Still crumbling through your fingers to  
your feet

To join the dust she came from. Did  
I love,

Or did I worship? judge, Aurora Leigh!  
But, if indeed I loved, 'twas long ago,—  
So long! before the sun and moon were  
made,

Before the hells were open,—ah, before  
I heard my child cry in the desert night,  
And knew he had no father. It may be  
I'm not as strong as other women are,  
Who, torn and crushed, are not undone  
from love.

It may be I am colder than the dead,  
Who, being dead, love always. But for  
me,

Once killed, this ghost of Marian loves  
no more,

No more . . except the child! . . no more  
at all.

I told your cousin, sir, that I was dead;  
And now, she thinks I'll get up from my  
grave,

And wear my chin-cloth for a wedding-  
veil,

And glide along the churchyard like a  
bride

While all the dead keep whispering  
through the withes,

"You would be better in your place  
with us,

You pitiful corruption!" At the thought,  
The damps break out on me like leprosy

Although I'm clean. Aye, clean as  
Marian Erle!

As Marian Leigh, I know, I were not  
clean:

Nor have I so much life that I should love,  
Except the child. Ah God! I could not  
bear

To see my darling on a good man's knees,  
And know, by such a look, or such a sigh,  
Or such a silence, that he thought some-  
times,

"This child was fathered by some  
cursed wretch" . .

For, Romney,—angels are less tender-  
wise

Than God and mothers: even *you* would  
think

What *we* think never. He is ours, the  
child;

And *we* would sooner vex a soul in heaven  
By coupling with it the dead body's  
thought,

It left behind it in a last month's grave,  
Than, in my child, see other than . . my  
child.

We only, never call him fatherless  
Who has God and his mother. O my babe,  
My pretty, pretty blossom, an ill-wind  
Once blew upon my breast! can any  
think

I'd have another,—one called happier,  
A fathered child, with father's love and  
race

That's worn as bold and open as a smile,  
To vex my darling when he's asked his  
name

And has no answer! What! a happier  
child

Than mine, my best,—who laughed so  
loud to-night

He could not sleep for pastime! Nay,  
I swear

By life and love, that, if I lived like some,  
And loved like . . *some*, aye, loved you,  
Romney Leigh,

As some love (eyes that have wept so  
much, see clear),

I've room for no more children in my  
arms,

My kisses are all melted on one mouth,  
I would not push my darling to a stool  
To dandle babies. Here's a hand shall  
keep

For ever clean without a marriage-ring,  
To tend my boy until he cease to need  
One steadying finger of it, and desert  
(Not miss) his mother's lap, to sit with  
men.

And when I miss him (not he me) I'll come  
And say, "Now give me some of  
Romney's work,

To help your outcast orphans of the world  
And comfort grief with grief." For you,  
meantime,

Most noble Romney, wed a noble wife,  
And open on each other your great  
souls,—

I need not farther bless you. If I dared  
But strain and touch her in her upper  
sphere

And say, "Come down to Romney—  
pay my debt!"

I should be joyful with the stream of joy  
Sent through me. But the moon is in  
my face . .

I dare not,—though I guess the name he  
loves ;

I'm learned with my studies of old days,  
Remembering how he crushed his under-  
lip

When some one came and spoke, or did  
not come :

Aurora, I could touch her with my hand,  
And fly because I dare not.'

She was gone.  
He smiled so sternly that I spoke in haste:  
'Forgive her—she sees clearly for her-  
self:

Her instinct's holy.'

'I forgive!' he said,  
'I only marvel how she sees so sure,  
While others' . . there he paused,—then  
hoarse, abrupt,—

'Aurora! you forgive us, her and me?  
For her, the thing she sees, poor loyal  
child,

If once corrected by the thing I know,  
Had been unspoken, since she loves you  
well,

Has leave to love you :—while for me,  
alas,

If once or twice I let my heart escape  
This night, . . remember, where hearts  
slip and fall

They break beside: we're parting,—  
parting,—ah,

You do not love, that you should surely  
know

What that word means. Forgive, be  
tolerant ;

It had not been, but that I felt myself  
So safe in impuissance and despair,  
I could not hurt you though I tossed my  
arms

And sighed my soul out. The most utter  
wretch

Will choose his postures when he comes  
to die,

However in the presence of a queen ;  
And you'll forgive me some unseemly  
spasms

Which meant no more than dying. Do  
you think

I had ever come here in my perfect mind,  
Unless I had come here in my settled mind  
Bound Marian's, bound to keep the bond  
and give

My name, my house, my hand, the things  
I could,

To Marian? For even I could give as  
much :

Even I, affronting her exalted soul  
By a supposition that she wanted these,  
Could act the husband's coat and hat set  
up

To creak i' the wind and drive the world-  
crows off

From pecking in her garden. Straw  
can fill

A hole to keep out vermin. Now, at last,  
I own heaven's angels round her life  
suffice

To fight the rats of our society,  
Without this Romney: I can see it at last;  
And here is ended my pretension which  
The most pretended. Over-proud of  
course,

Even so!—but not so stupid . . blind . .  
that I,

Whom thus the great Taskmaster of the  
world

Has set to meditate mistaken work,  
My dreary face against a dim blank wall  
Throughout man's natural lifetime,—  
could pretend

Or wish . . O love, I have loved you!  
O my soul,

I have lost you!—but I swear by all  
yourself.

And all you might have been to me these  
years

If that June-morning had not failed my  
hope,—

I'm not so bestial, to regret that day  
This night,—this night, which still to  
you is fair!

Nay, not so blind, Aurora. I attest  
Those stars above us which I cannot  
see . . '

'You cannot' . .

'That if Heaven itself should stoop,  
Remix the lots, and give me another  
chance,

I'd say, "No other!"—I'd record my  
blank.

Aurora never should be wife of mine.'

'Not see the stars?'

'Tis worse still, not to see  
To find your hand, although we're  
parting, dear.

A moment let me hold it ere we part;  
And understand my last words—these,  
at last!

I would not have you thinking when I'm  
gone

That Romney dared to hanker for your  
love

In thought or vision, if attainable  
(Which certainly for me it never was),  
And wished to use it for a dog to-day  
To help the blind man stumbling. God  
forbid!

And now I know He held you in His palm,  
And kept you open-eyed to all my faults,  
To save you at last from such a dreary end.  
Believe me, dear, that, if I had known  
like Him

What loss was coming on me, I had done  
As well in this as He has.—Farewell, you  
Who are still my light,—farewell! How  
late it is:

I know that, now. You've been too  
patient, sweet.

I will but blow my whistle toward the lane,  
And some one comes,—the same who  
brought me here.

Get in—Good-night.'

'A moment. Heavenly Christ!  
A moment. Speak once, Romney. 'Tis  
not true.

I hold your hands, I look into your face—  
You see me!

'No more than the blessed stars.  
Be blessed too, Aurora. Nay, my sweet,  
You tremble. Tender-hearted! Do you  
mind

Of yore, dear, how you used to cheat  
old John,

And let the mice out slyly from his traps,  
Until he marvelled at the soul in mice  
Which took the cheese and left the  
snare! The same

Dear soft heart always! 'Twas for this  
I grieved

Howe's letter never reached you. Ah,  
you had heard

Of illness,—not the issue, not the extent:  
My life long sick with tossings up and  
down,

The sudden revulsion in the blazing house,  
The strain and struggle both of body and  
soul,

Which left fire running in my veins for  
blood:

Scarce lacked that thunderbolt of the  
falling beam

Which nicked me on the forehead as I  
passed

The gallery-door with a burden. Say  
heaven's bolt,

Not William Erle's, not Marian's father's,  
—tramp

And poacher, whom I found for what he  
was,

And, eager for her sake to rescue him,  
Forth swept from the open highway of  
the world,

Road-dust and all,—till, like a woodland  
boar

Most naturally unwilling to be tamed,  
He notched me with his tooth. But not  
a word

To Marian! and I do not think, besides,  
He turned the tilting of the beam my  
way,—

And if he laughed, as many swear, poor  
wretch,

Nor he nor I supposed the hurt so deep.  
We'll hope his next laugh may be merrier,  
In a better cause.'

'Blind, Romney!'  
'Ah, my friend,  
You'll learn to say it in a cheerful voice.

I, too, at first desponded. To be blind,  
Turned out of nature, mulcted as a man,  
Refused the daily largesse of the sun  
To humble creatures! When the fever's  
heat

Dropped from me, as the flame did from  
my house,

And left me ruined like it, stripped of all  
The hues and shapes of aspectable life,  
A mere bare blind stone in the blaze of  
day,

A man, upon the outside of the earth,  
As dark as ten feet under, in the grave,—  
Why that seemed hard.

'No hope!'

'A tear! you weep,  
Divine Aurora! tears upon my hand!  
I've seen you weeping for a mouse, a  
bird,—

But, weep for me, Aurora! Yes, there's  
hope.

Not hope of sight,—I could be learned,  
dear,

And tell you in what Greek and Latin  
name

The visual nerve is withered to the root,  
Though the outer eyes appear indifferent,  
Unspotted in their crystals. But there's  
hope.

The spirit, from behind this dethroned  
sense,

Sees, waits in patience till the walls  
break up

From which the bas-relief and fresco  
have dropt:

There's hope. The man here, once so  
arrogant

And restless, so ambitious, for his part,  
Of dealing with statistically packed  
Disorders (from a pattern on his nail),  
And packing such things quite another  
way,—

Is now contented. From his personal  
loss

He has come to hope for others when  
they lose,

And wear a gladder faith in what we  
gain . . .

Through bitter experience, compensation  
sweet,

Like that tear, sweetest. I am quiet  
now,

As tender surely for the suffering world,

But quiet,—sitting at the wall to learn,  
Content henceforth to do the thing I can:  
For, though as powerless, said I, as a  
stone,

A stone can still give shelter to a worm,  
And it is worth while being a stone for  
that:

There's hope, Aurora.'

'Is there hope for me?

For me?—and is there room beneath the  
stone

For such a worm!—And if I came and  
said . . .

What all this weeping scarce will let  
me say,

And yet what women cannot say at all  
But weeping bitterly . . . (the pride keeps  
up,

Until the heart breaks under it) . . . I  
love,—

I love you, Romney' . . .

'Silence!' he exclaimed.

'A woman's pity sometimes makes her  
mad.

A man's distraction must not cheat his  
soul

To take advantage of it. Yet, 'tis hard—  
Farewell, Aurora.'

'But I love you, sir;

And when a woman says she loves a man,  
The man must hear her, though he love  
her not,

Which . . . hush! . . . he has leave to  
answer in his turn;

She will not surely blame him. As for me,  
You call it pity,—think I'm generous?

'Twere somewhat easier, for a woman  
proud

As I am, and I'm very vilely proud,  
To let it pass as such, and press on you

Love born of pity,—seeing that excellent  
loves

Are born so, often, nor the quicker  
die,—

And this would set me higher by the head  
Than now I stand. No matter: let the  
truth

Stand high; Aurora must be humble: no,  
My love's not pity merely. Obviously

I'm not a generous woman, never was,  
Or else, of old, I had not looked so near

To weights and measures, grudging you  
the power

To give, as first I scorned your power  
to judge

For me, Aurora. I would have no gifts  
Forsooth, but God's,—and I would use  
*them* too

According to my pleasure and my choice,  
As He and I were equals, you below,  
Excluded from that level of interchange  
Admitting benefaction. You were wrong  
In much! you said so. I was wrong  
in most.

Oh, most! You only thought to rescue  
men

By half-means, half-way, seeing half  
their wants,

While thinking nothing of your personal  
gain.

But I who saw the human nature broad  
At both sides, comprehending too the  
soul's,

And all the high necessities of Art,  
Betrayed the thing I saw, and wronged  
my own life

For which I pleaded. Passioned to exalt  
The artist's instinct in me at the cost  
Of putting down the woman's, I forgot  
No perfect artist is developed here  
From any imperfect woman. Flower  
from root,

And spiritual from natural, grade by  
grade

In all our life. A handful of the earth  
To make God's image! the despised poor  
earth,

The healthy odorous earth,—I missed  
with it

The divine Breath that blows the nostrils  
out

To ineffable inflatus,—aye, the breath  
Which love is. Art is much, but love is  
more.

O Art, my Art, thou'rt much, but Love  
is more!

Art symbolizes heaven, but Love is God  
And makes heaven. I, Aurora, fell from  
mine.

I would not be a woman like the rest,  
A simple woman who believes in love  
And owns the right of love because she  
loves,

And, hearing she's beloved, is satisfied  
With what contents God: I must analyse,  
Confront, and question; just as if a fly

Refused to warm itself in any sun  
Till such was *in leone*: I must fret  
Forsooth because the month was only  
May,

Be faithless of the kind of proffered love,  
And captious, lest it miss my dignity,  
And scornful, that my lover sought a wife  
To use . . . to use! O Romney, O my love,  
I am changed since then, changed wholly,  
—for indeed

If now you'd stoop so low to take my love  
And use it roughly, without stint or spare,  
As men use common things with more  
behind

(And, in this, ever would be more behind),  
To any mean and ordinary end,—

The joy would set me like a star, in  
heaven,

So high up, I should shine because of  
height

And not of virtue. Yet in one respect,  
Just one, beloved, I am in no wise  
changed:

I love you, loved you . . . loved you first  
and last,

And love you on for ever. Now I know  
I loved you always, Romney. She  
who died

Knew that, and said so; Lady Waldemar  
Knows that; . . . and Marian. I had  
known the same,

Except that I was prouder than I knew,  
And not so honest. Aye, and, as I live,  
I should have died so, crushing in my hand  
This rose of love, the wasp inside and all,  
Ignoring ever to my soul and you  
Both rose and pain,—except for this  
great loss.

This great despair,—to stand before  
your face

And know you do not see me where  
I stand.

You think, perhaps, I am not changed  
from pride,

And that I chiefly bear to say such words,  
Because you cannot shame me with  
your eyes!

O calm, grand eyes, extinguished in  
a storm,

Blown out like lights o'er melancholy seas,  
Though shrieked for by the ship-  
wrecked,—O my Dark,

My Cloud,—to go before me every day

While I go ever toward the wilderness,—  
I would that you could see me bare to  
the soul!

If this be pity, 'tis so for myself,  
And not for Romney! *he* can stand alone;  
A man like *him* is never overcome:  
No woman like me, counts him pitiable  
While saints applaud him. He mistook  
the world;

But I mistook my own heart, and that slip  
Was fatal. Romney,—will you leave  
me here?

So wrong, so proud, so weak, so un-  
consoled,

So mere a woman!—and I love you so,  
I love you, Romney—

Could I see his face,  
I wept so! Did I drop against his breast,  
Or did his arms constrain me? were  
my cheeks

Hot, overflowed, with my tears, or his?  
And which of our two large explosive  
hearts

So shook me? That, I know not.  
There were words

That broke in utterance . . melted, in  
the fire,—

Embrace, that was convulsion, . . then  
a kiss

As long and silent as the ecstatic night,  
And deep, deep, shuddering breaths,  
which meant beyond

Whatever could be told by word or kiss.

But what he said . . I have written day  
by day,

With somewhat even writing. Did  
I think

That such a passionate rain would  
intercept

And dash this last page! What he said,  
indeed,

I fain would write it down here like the  
rest,

To keep it in my eyes, as in my ears,  
The heart's sweet scripture, to be read  
at night

When weary, or at morning when afraid,  
And lean my heaviest oath on when  
I swear

That, when all's done, all tried, all  
counted here,

All great arts, and all good philosophies,

This love just puts its hand out in a dream  
And straight outstretches all things.

What he said,  
I fain would write. But if an angel spoke  
In thunder, should we haply know  
much more

Than that it thundered? If a cloud came  
down

And wrapt us wholly, could we draw  
its shape,

As if on the outside and not overcome?  
And so he spake. His breath against  
my face

Confused his words, yet made them  
more intense

(As when the sudden finger of the wind  
Will wipe a row of single city-lamps  
To a pure white line of flame, more  
luminous

Because of obliteration), more intense,  
The intimate presence carrying in itself

Complete communication, as with souls  
Who, having put the body off, perceive

Through simply being. Thus, 'twas  
granted me

To know he loved me to the depth and  
height

Of such large natures, ever competent,  
With grand horizons by the sea or land,

To love's grand sunrise. Small spheres  
hold small fires,

But he loved largely, as a man can love  
Who, baffled in his love, dares live his life,

Accept the ends which God loves, for  
his own,

And lift a constant aspect.

From the day  
I brought to England my poor searching  
face

(An orphan even of my father's grave)  
He had loved me, watched me, watched  
his soul in mine,

Which in me grew and heightened into  
love.

For he, a boy still, had been told the tale  
Of how a fairy bride from Italy

With smells of oleanders in her hair,  
Was coming through the vines to touch  
his hand;

Whereat the blood of boyhood on the  
palm

Made sudden heats. And when at last  
I came,

And lived before him, lived, and rarely  
 smiled,  
 He smiled and loved me for the thing  
 I was,  
 As every child will love the year's first  
 flower  
 (Not certainly the fairest of the year,  
 But, in which, the complete year seems  
 to blow),  
 The poor sad snowdrop,—growing  
 between drifts,  
 Mysterious medium 'twixt the plant and  
 frost,  
 So faint with winter while so quick with  
 spring,  
 And doubtful if to thaw itself away  
 With that snow near it. Not that  
 Romney Leigh  
 Had loved me coldly. If I thought so once,  
 It was as if I had held my hand in fire  
 And shook for cold. But now I under-  
 stood  
 For ever, that the very fire and heat  
 Of troubling passion in him burned him  
 clear,  
 And shaped, to dubious order, word  
 and act:  
 That, just because he loved me over all,  
 All wealth, all lands, all social privilege,  
 To which chance made him unexpected  
 heir,  
 And, just because on all these lesser gifts,  
 Constrained by conscience and the sense  
 of wrong  
 He had stamped with steady hand God's  
 arrow-mark  
 Of dedication to the human need,  
 He thought it should be so too, with  
 his love.  
 He, passionately loving, would bring  
 down  
 His love, his life, his best (because the  
 best),  
 His bride of dreams, who walked so  
 still and high  
 Through flowery poems as through  
 meadow-grass,  
 The dust of golden lilies on her feet,  
 That *she* should walk beside him on the  
 rocks  
 In all that clang and hewing out of men,  
 And help the work of help which was  
 his life,

And prove he kept back nothing,—not  
 his soul.  
 And when I failed him,—for I failed  
 him, I,  
 And when it seemed he had missed my  
 love, he thought  
 'Aurora makes room for a working-  
 noon,'  
 And so, self-girded with torn strips of  
 hope,  
 Took up his life as if it were for death  
 (Just capable of one heroic aim),  
 And threw it in the thickest of the  
 world,—  
 At which men laughed as if he had  
 drowned a dog.  
 No wonder,—since Aurora failed him  
 first!  
 The morning and the evening made his  
 day.  
 But oh, the night! oh, bitter-sweet!  
 oh, sweet!  
 O dark, O moon and stars, O ecstasy  
 Of darkness! O great mystery of love,  
 In which absorbed, loss, anguish, trea-  
 son's self  
 Enlarges rapture,—as a pebble dropt  
 In some full wine-cup over-brims the  
 wine!  
 While we two sate together, leaned  
 that night  
 So close, my very garments crept and  
 thrilled  
 With strange electric life, and both my  
 cheeks  
 Grew red, then pale, with touches from  
 my hair  
 In which his breath was,—while the  
 golden moon  
 Was hung before our faces as the badge  
 Of some sublime inherited despair,  
 Since ever to be seen by only one,—  
 A voice said, low and rapid as a sigh,  
 Yet breaking, I felt conscious, from a  
 smile,  
 'Thank God, who made me blind, to  
 make me see!  
 Shine on, Aurora, dearest light of souls,  
 Which rul'st for evermore both day and  
 night!  
 I am happy.'  
 I flung closer to his breast,

As sword that, after battle, flings to sheath ;

And, in that hurtle of united souls,  
The mystic motions which in common moods

Areshut beyond our sense, broke in on us,  
And, as we sate, we felt the old earth spin,

And all the starry turbulence of worlds  
Swing round us in their audient circles, till,

If that same golden moon were overhead  
Or if beneath our feet, we did not know.

And then calm, equal, smooth with weights of joy,

His voice rose, as some chief musician's song

Amid the old Jewish temple's Selah-pause,

And bade me mark how we two met at last

Upon this moon-bathed promontory of earth,

To give up much on each side, then take all.

'Beloved,' it sang, 'we must be here to work ;

And men who work can only work for men,

And, not to work in vain, must comprehend

Humanity and so work humanly,  
And raise men's bodies still by raising souls,

As God did first.'

'But stand upon the earth,'  
I said, 'to raise them (this is human too,

There's nothing high which has not first been low,

My humbleness, said One, has made Me great !),

As God did last.'

'And work all silently  
And simply,' he returned, 'as God does all ;

Distort our nature never for our work,  
Nor count our right hands stronger for being hoofs.

The man most man, with tenderest human hands,

Works best for men,—as God in Nazareth.'

He paused upon the word, and then resumed :

'Fewer programmes, we who have no prescience.

Fewer systems, we who are held and do not hold.

Less mapping out of masses to be saved,  
By nations or by sexes. Fourier's void,

And Comte absurd,—and Cabet, puerile.  
Subsist no rules of life outside of life,

No perfect manners, without Christian souls :

The Christ Himself had been no Lawgiver  
Unless He had given the life, too, with the law.'

I echoed thoughtfully—'The man, most man,

Works best for men, and, if most man indeed,

He gets his manhood plainest from his soul :

While obviously this stringent soul itself  
Obeys the old law of development,

The Spirit ever witnessing in ours,  
And Love, the soul of soul, within the soul,

Evolving it sublimely. First, God's love.'

'And next,' he smiled, 'the love of wedded souls,

Which still presents that mystery's counterpart.

Sweet shadow-rose, upon the water of life,

Of such a mystic substance, Sharon gave  
A name to ! human, vital, fructuous rose,

Whose calyx holds the multitude of leaves,

Loves filial, loves fraternal, neighbour-loves

And civic—all fair petals, all good scents,  
All reddened, sweetened from one central Heart !'

'Alas,' I cried, 'it was not long ago,  
You swore this very social rose smelt ill.'

'Alas,' he answered, 'is it a rose at all ?  
The filial's thankless, the fraternal's hard,

The rest is lost. I do but stand and think,  
Across the waters of a troubled life

This Flower of Heaven so vainly over-  
 hangs,  
 What perfect counterpart would be in  
 sight  
 If tanks were clearer. Let us clean the  
 tubes,  
 And wait for rains. O poet, O my love,  
 Since *I* was too ambitious in my deed  
 And thought to distance all men in success  
 (Till God came on me, marked the place  
 and said,  
 "Ill-doer, henceforth keep within this line,  
 Attempting less than others,"—and I  
 stand  
 And work among Christ's little ones,  
 content),  
 Come thou, my compensation, my dear  
 sight,  
 My morning-star, my morning,—rise and  
 shine,  
 And touch my hills with radiance not  
 their own.  
 Shine out for two, Aurora, and fulfil  
 My falling-short that must be! work for  
 two,  
 As I, though thus restrained, for two,  
 shall love!  
 Gaze on, with inscient vision toward the  
 sun,  
 And, from his visceral heat, pluck out  
 the roots  
 Of light beyond him. Art's a service,—  
 mark:  
 A silver key is given to thy clasp,  
 And thou shalt stand unwearied, night  
 and day,  
 And fix it in the hard, slow-turning wards,  
 To open, so, that intermediate door  
 Betwixt the different planes of sensuous  
 form  
 And form insensuous, that inferior men  
 May learn to feel on still through these  
 to those,  
 And bless thy ministration. The world  
 waits  
 For help. Beloved, let us love so well,  
 Our work shall still be better for our love,  
 And still our love be sweeter for our work,  
 And both commended, for the sake of each,  
 By all true workers and true lovers born.  
 Now press the clarion on thy woman's lip  
 (Love's holy kiss shall still keep con-  
 secrate)

And breathe thy fine keen breath along  
 the brass,  
 And blow all class-walls level as Jericho's  
 Past Jordan,—crying from the top of  
 souls,  
 To souls, that, here assembled on earth's  
 flats,  
 They get them to some purer eminence  
 Than any hitherto beheld for clouds!  
 What height we know not,—but the way  
 we know,  
 And how by mounting ever, we attain,  
 And so climb on. It is the hour for souls,  
 That bodies, leavened by the will and love,  
 Belighted to redemption. The world's  
 old,  
 But the old world waits the time to be  
 renewed,  
 Toward which, new hearts in individual  
 growth  
 Must quicken, and increase to multitude  
 In new dynasties of the race of men;  
 Developed whence, shall grow spontan-  
 eously  
 New churches, new economies, new  
 laws  
 Admitting freedom, new societies  
 Excluding falsehood: *He* shall make all  
 new.  
 My Romney!—Lifting up my hand in his,  
 As wheeled by Seeing spirits toward the  
 east,  
 He turned instinctively, where, faint and  
 far,  
 Along the tingling desert of the sky,  
 Beyond the circle of the conscious hills,  
 Were laid in jasper-stone as clear as glass  
 The first foundations of that new, near  
 Day  
 Which should be builded out of heaven  
 to God.  
 He stood a moment with erected brows  
 In silence, as a creature might who  
 gazed,—  
 Stood calm, and fed his blind, majestic  
 eyes  
 Upon the thought of perfect noon: and  
 when  
 I saw his soul saw,—'Jasper first,' I said,  
 'And second, sapphire; third, chalce-  
 dony;  
 The rest in order,—last, an amethyst.'

# POEMS BEFORE CONGRESS

## PREFACE

THESE poems were written under the pressure of the events they indicate, after a residence in Italy of so many years, that the present triumph of great principles is heightened to the writer's feelings by the disastrous issue of the last movement, witnessed from 'Casa Guidi Windows' in 1849. Yet, if the verses should appear to English readers too pungently rendered to admit of a patriotic respect to the English sense of things, I will not excuse myself on such grounds, nor on the ground of my attachment to the Italian people, and my admiration of their heroic constancy and union. What I have written has simply been written because I love truth and justice *quand même*,—'more than Plato' and Plato's country, more than Dante and Dante's country, more even than Shakespeare and Shakespeare's country.

And if patriotism means the flattery of one's nation in every case, then the patriot, take it as you please, is merely a courtier; which I am not, though I have written 'Napoleon III in Italy.' It is time to limit the significance of certain terms, or to enlarge the significance of certain things. Nationality is excellent in its place; and the instinct of self-love is the root of a man, which will develop into sacrificial virtues. But all the virtues are means and uses; and, if we hinder their tendency to growth and expansion, we both destroy them as virtues, and degrade them to that rankst species of corruption reserved for the most noble organizations. For instance,—non-intervention in the affairs of neighbouring states is a high political virtue; but non-intervention does not mean, passing by on the other side when your neighbour falls among thieves,—or Phariseism would recover it from Christianity. Freedom itself is virtue, as well as privilege; but freedom of the seas

does not mean piracy, nor freedom of the land, brigandage; nor freedom of the senate, freedom to cudgel a dissident member, nor freedom of the press, freedom to calumniate and lie. So, if patriotism be a virtue indeed, it cannot mean an exclusive devotion to one's country's interests,—for that is only another form of devotion to personal interests, family interests, or provincial interests, all of which, if not driven past themselves, are vulgar and immoral objects. Let us put away the little Pedlingtonism unworthy of a great nation, and too prevalent among us. If the man who does not look beyond this natural life is of a somewhat narrow order, what must be the man who does not look beyond his own frontier or his own sea?

I confess that I dream of the day when an English statesman shall arise with a heart too large for England, having courage in the face of his countrymen to assert of some suggested policy,—'This is good for your trade: this is necessary for your domination; but it will vex a people hard by; it will hurt a people farther off; it will profit nothing to the general humanity: therefore, away with it!—it is not for you or for me.' When a British minister dares speak so, and when a British public applauds him speaking, then shall the nation be so glorious, that her praise, instead of exploding from within, from loud civic mouths, shall come to her from without, as all worthy praise must, from the alliances she has fostered, and from the populations she has saved.

And poets who write of the events of that time, shall not need to justify themselves in prefaces, for ever so little jarring of the national sentiment, imputable to their rimes.

ROME, February, 1860.

## POEMS BEFORE CONGRESS

### NAPOLEON III IN ITALY

#### I

EMPEROR, Emperor!  
 From the centre to the shore,  
 From the Seine back to the Rhine,  
 Stood eight millions up and swore  
 By their manhood's right divine  
 So to elect and legislate,  
 This man should renew the line  
 Broken in a strain of fate  
 And leagued kings at Waterloo,  
 When the people's hands let go.  
 Emperor  
 Evermore.

#### II

With a universal shout  
 They took the old regalia out  
 From an open grave that day:  
 From a grave that would not close,  
 Where the first Napoleon lay  
 Expectant, in repose,  
 As still as Merlin, with his conquering face  
 Turned up in its unquenchable appeal  
 To men and heroes of the advancing  
 race,—  
 Prepared to set the seal  
 Of what has been on what shall be.  
 Emperor  
 Evermore.

#### III

The thinkers stood aside  
 To let the nation act.  
 Some hated the new-constituted fact  
 Of empire, as pride treading on their  
 pride.  
 Some quailed, lest what was poisonous  
 in the past  
 Should graft itself in that Druidic bough  
 On this green now.  
 Some cursed, because at last  
 The open heavens to which they had  
 look'd in vain  
 For many a golden fall of marvellous rain  
 Were closed in brass; and some  
 Wept on because a gone thing could not  
 come;

And some were silent, doubting all things  
 for  
 That popular conviction,—evermore  
 Emperor.

#### IV

That day I did not hate  
 Nor doubt, nor quail nor curse.  
 I, reverencing the people, did not bate  
 My reverence of their deed and oracle,  
 Nor vainly prate  
 Of better and of worse  
 Against the great conclusion of their will.  
 And yet, O voice and verse,  
 Which God set in me to acclaim and sing  
 Conviction, exaltation, aspiration,  
 We gave no music to the patent thing,  
 Nor spared a holy rhythm to throb and  
 swim  
 About the name of him  
 Translated to the sphere of domination  
 By democratic passion!  
 I was not used, at least,  
 Nor can be, now or then,  
 To stroke the ermine beast  
 On any kind of throne  
 (Though builded by a nation for its own),  
 And swell the surging choir for kings of  
 men—  
 'Emperor  
 Evermore.'

#### V

But now, Napoleon, now  
 That, leaving far behind the purple throng  
 Of vulgar monarchs, thou  
 Tread'st higher in thy deed  
 Than stair of throne can lead,  
 To help in the hour of wrong  
 The broken hearts of nations to be  
 strong,—  
 Now, lifted as thou art  
 To the level of pure song,  
 We stand to meet thee on these Alpine  
 snows!  
 And while the palpitating peaks break out  
 Ecstatic from somnambular repose  
 With answers to the presence and the  
 shout,

We, poets of the people, who take part  
With elemental justice, natural right,  
Join in our echoes also, nor refrain.

We meet thee, O Napoleon, at this height  
At last, and find thee great enough to  
praise.

Receive the poet's chrism, which smells  
beyond

The priest's, and pass thy ways;—  
An English poet warns thee to maintain  
God's word, not England's:—let His  
truth be true

And all men liars! with His truth respond  
To all men's lie. Exalt the sword and  
smite

On that long anvil of the Apennine  
Where Austria forged the Italian chain  
in view

Of seven consenting nations, sparks of fine  
Admonitory light,

Till men's eyes wink before convictions  
new.

Flash in God's justice to the world's  
amazement,

Sublime Deliverer!—after many days  
Found worthy of the deed thou art come  
to do—

Emperor  
Evermore.

## VI

But Italy, my Italy,  
Can it last, this gleam?  
Can she live and be strong,  
Or is it another dream  
Like the rest we have dreamed so long?

And shall it, must it be,  
That after the battle-cloud has broken  
She will die off again  
Like the rain,  
Or like a poet's song  
Sung of her, sad at the end  
Because her name is Italy,—  
Die and count no friend?

Is it true,—may it be spoken,—  
That she who has lain so still,  
With a wound in her breast,  
And a flower in her hand,  
And a gravestone under her head,  
While every nation at will  
Beside her has dared to stand  
And flout her with pity and scorn,  
Saying, 'She is at rest,

She is fair, she is dead,  
And, leaving room in her stead  
To Us who are later born,  
This is certainly best!'  
Saying, 'Alas, she is fair,  
Very fair, but dead,  
And so we have room for the race.'

—Can it be true, be true,  
That she lives anew?  
That she rises up at the shout of her sons,  
At the trumpet of France,  
And lives anew?—is it true  
That she has not moved in a trance,  
As in Forty-eight?

When her eyes were troubled with blood  
Till she knew not friend from foe,  
Till her hand was caught in a strait  
Of her cerement and baffled so  
From doing the deed she would;  
And her weak foot stumbled across  
The grave of a king,  
And down she dropt at heavy loss,  
And we gloomily covered her face and  
said,

'We have dreamed the thing;  
She is not alive, but dead.'

## VII

Now, shall we say  
Our Italy lives indeed?  
And if it were not for the beat and bray  
Of drum and trump of martial men,  
Should we feel the underground heave  
and strain,

Where heroes left their dust as a seed  
Sure to emerge one day?  
And if it were not for the rhythmic march  
Of France and Piedmont's double hosts,  
Should we hear the ghosts  
Thrill through ruined aisle and arch,  
Throb along the frescoed wall,  
Whisper an oath by that divine  
They left in picture, book, and stone,  
That Italy is not dead at all?

Aye, if it were not for the tears in our eyes,  
These tears of a sudden passionate joy,  
Should we see her arise  
From the place where the wicked are  
overthrown,

Italy, Italy? loosed at length  
From the tyrant's thrall,  
Pale and calm in her strength?  
Pale as the silver cross of Savoy

When the hand that bears the flag is brave,  
And not a breath is stirring, save  
What is blown  
Over the war-trump's lip of brass,  
Ere Garibaldi forces the pass!

VIII

Aye, it is so, even so.  
Aye, and it shall be so.  
Each broken stone that long ago  
She flung behind her as she went  
In discouragement and bewilderment  
Through the cairns of Time, and missed  
her way

Between to-day and yesterday,  
Up springs a living man.  
And each man stands with his face in  
the light

Of his own drawn sword,  
Ready to do what a hero can.  
Wall to sap, or river to ford,  
Cannon to front, or foe to pursue,  
Still ready to do, and sworn to be true,

As a man and a patriot can.  
Piedmontese, Neapolitan,  
Lombard, Tuscan, Romagnole,  
Each man's body having a soul,—  
Count how many they stand,  
All of them sons of the land,  
Every live man there  
Allied to a dead man below,  
And the dearest with blood to spare  
To quicken a living hand  
In case it should ever be slow.  
Count how many they come  
To the beat of Piedmont's drum,  
With faces keener and grayer  
Than swords of the Austrian slayer,  
All set against the foe.

'Emperor  
Evermore.'

IX

Out of the dust, where they ground them,  
Out of the holes, where they dogged them;  
Out of the hulks, where they wound them  
In iron, tortured and flogged them;  
Out of the streets, where they chased  
them,  
Taxed them and then bayoneted  
them,—  
Out of the homes, where they spied on  
them

(Using their daughters and wives),  
Out of the church, where they fretted  
them,  
Rotted their souls and debased them,  
Trained them to answer with knives,  
Then cursed them all at their  
prayers!—

Out of cold lands, not theirs,  
Where they exiled them, starved them,  
lied on them;  
Back they come like a wind, in vain  
Cramped up in the hills, that roars its  
road

The stronger into the open plain;  
Or like a fire that burns the hotter  
And longer for the crust of cinder,  
Serving better the ends of the potter;  
Or like a restrained word of God,  
Fulfilling itself by what seems to  
hinder.

'Emperor  
Evermore.'

X

Shout for France and Savoy!  
Shout for the helper and doer.  
Shout for the good sword's ring,  
Shout for the thought still truer.  
Shout for the spirits at large  
Who passed for the dead this spring,  
Whose living glory is sure.  
Shout for France and Savoy!  
Shout for the council and charge!  
Shout for the head of Cavour;  
And shout for the heart of a King  
That's great with a nation's joy.  
Shout for France and Savoy!

XI

Take up the child, Macmahon, though  
Thy hand be red  
From Magenta's dead,  
And riding on, in front of the troop,  
In the dust of the whirlwind of  
war  
Through the gate of the city of Milan,  
stoop  
And take up the child to thy saddle-  
bow,  
Nor fear the touch as soft as a flower  
Of his smile as clear as a star!  
Thou hast a right to the child, we  
say,

Since the women are weeping for joy as  
those

Who, by thy help and from this day,  
Shall be happy mothers indeed.  
They are raining flowers from terrace  
and roof :

Take up the flower in the child.  
While the shout goes up of a nation freed  
And heroically self-reconciled,  
Till the snow on that peaked Alp aloof  
Starts, as feeling God's finger anew,  
And all those cold white marble fires  
Of mounting saints on the Duomo-spires  
Flicker against the Blue.

'Emperor  
Evermore.'

## XII

Aye, it is He,  
Who rides at the King's right hand !  
Leave room to his horse and draw to the  
side,

Nor press too near in the ecstasy  
Of a newly delivered impassioned land :

He is moved, you see,  
He who has done it all.

They call it a cold stern face ;

But this is Italy  
Who rises up to her place !—  
For this he fought in his youth,  
Of this he dreamed in the past ;  
The lines of the resolute mouth  
Tremble a little at last.

Cry, he has done it all !

'Emperor  
Evermore.'

## XIII

It is not strange that he did it,  
Though the deed may seem to strain  
To the wonderful, unpermitted,  
For such as lead and reign.  
But he is strange, this man :  
The people's instinct found him  
(A wind in the dark that ran  
Through a chink where was no door),  
And elected him and crowned him

Emperor  
Evermore.

## XIV

Autocrat ! let them scoff,  
Who fail to comprehend  
That a ruler incarnate of  
The people, must transcend

All common king-born kings.  
These subterranean springs  
A sudden outlet winning,  
Have special virtues to spend.  
The people's blood runs through him,  
Dilates from head to foot,  
Creates him absolute,  
And from this great beginning  
Evokes a greater end  
To justify and renew him—  
Emperor  
Evermore.

## XV

What ! did any maintain  
That God or the people (think !)  
Could make a marvel in vain !—  
Out of the water-jar there,  
Draw wine that none could drink ?  
Is this a man like the rest,  
This miracle, made unaware  
By a rapture of popular air,  
And caught to the place that was best ?  
You think he could barter and cheat  
As vulgar diplomats use,  
With the people's heart in his breast ?  
Prate a lie into shape  
Lest truth should cumber the road ;  
Play at the fast and loose  
Till the world is strangled with tape ;  
Maim the soul's complete  
To fit the hole of a toad ;  
And filch the dogman's meat  
To feed the offspring of God ?

## XVI

Nay, but he, this wonder,  
He cannot palter nor prate,  
Though many around him and under,  
With intellects trained to the curve,  
Distrust him in spirit and nerve  
Because his meaning is straight.  
Measure him ere he depart  
With those who have governed and led ;  
Larger so much by the heart,  
Larger so much by the head.

Emperor  
Evermore.

## XVII

He holds that, consenting or dissident,  
Nations must move with the time ;  
Assumes that crime with a precedent  
Doubles the guilt of the crime ;

—Denies that a slaver's bond,  
Or a treaty signed by knaves  
(*Quorum magna pars* and beyond  
Was one of an honest name),  
Gives an inextinguishable claim  
To abolishing men into slaves.  
Emperor  
Evermore.

XVIII

He will not swagger nor boast  
Of his country's meeds, in a tone  
Missuiting a great man most  
If such should speak of his own;  
Nor will he act, on her side,  
From motives baser, indeed,  
Than a man of a noble pride  
Can avow for himself at need;  
Never, for lucre or laurels,  
Or custom, though such should be rife,  
Adapting the smaller morals  
To measure the larger life.  
He, though the merchants persuade,  
And the soldiers are eager for strife,  
Finds not his country in quarrels  
Only to find her in trade,—  
While still he accords her such honour  
As never to flinch for her sake  
Where men put service upon her,  
Found heavy to undertake  
And scarcely like to be paid:  
Believing a nation may act  
Unselfishly—shiver a lance  
(As the least of her sons may, in fact)  
And not for a cause of finance.  
Emperor  
Evermore.

XIX

Great is he,  
Who uses his greatness for all.  
His name shall stand perpetually  
As a name to applaud and cherish,  
Not only within the civic wall  
For the loyal, but also without  
For the generous and free.  
Just is he,  
Who is just for the popular due  
As well as the private debt.  
The praise of nations ready to perish  
Fall on him,—crown him in view  
Of tyrants caught in the net,  
And statesmen dizzy with fear and doubt!

And though, because they are many,  
And he is merely one,  
And nations selfish and cruel  
Heap up the inquisitor's fuel  
To kill the body of high intents,  
And burn great deeds from their place,  
Till this, the greatest of any,  
May seem imperfectly done;  
Courage, whoever circumvents!  
Courage, courage, whoever is base!  
The soul of a high intent, be it known,  
Can die no more than any soul  
Which God keeps by Him under the  
throne;  
And this, at whatever interim,  
Shall live, and be consummated  
Into the being of deeds made whole.  
Courage, courage! happy is he,  
Of whom (himself among the dead  
And silent), this word shall be said;  
—That he might have had the world with  
him,  
But chose to side with suffering men,  
And had the world against him when  
He came to deliver Italy.  
Emperor  
Evermore.

THE DANCE

I

You remember down at Florence our  
Cascine,  
Where the people on the feast-days  
walk and drive,  
And, through the trees, long-drawn in  
many a green way,  
O'er-roofing hum and murmur like a  
hive,  
The river and the mountains look alive!

II

You remember the piazzone there, the  
stand-place  
Of carriages a-brim with Florence  
Beauties,  
Who lean and melt to music as the band  
plays,  
Or smile and chat with some one who  
afoot is,  
Or on horseback, in observance of  
male duties?

## III

'Tis so pretty, in the afternoons of summer,  
So many gracious faces brought together!

Call it rout, or call it concert, they have  
come here,  
In the floating of the fan and of the  
feather,  
To reciprocate with beauty the fine  
weather.

## IV

While the flower-girls offer nosegays  
(because *they* too  
Go with other sweets) at every car-  
riage-door;

Here, by shake of a white finger, signed  
away to

Some next buyer, who sits buying  
score on score,

Piling roses upon roses evermore.

## V

And last season, when the French camp  
had its station

In the meadow-ground, things quick-  
ened and grew gayer

Through the mingling of the liberating  
nation

With this people; groups of French-  
men everywhere,

Strolling, gazing, judging lightly . .  
'who was fair.'

## VI

Then the noblest lady present took upon  
her

To speak nobly from her carriage for  
the rest;

'Pray these officers from France to do us  
honour

By dancing with us straightway.'—  
The request

Was gravely apprehended as ad-  
dressed.

## VII

And the men of France bareheaded,  
bowing lowly,

Led out each a proud signora to the  
space

Which the startled crowd had rounded  
for them—slowly,

Just a touch of still emotion in his face,  
Not presuming, through the symbol,  
on the grace.

## VIII

There was silence in the people: some  
lips trembled,

But none jested. Broke the music,  
at a glance:

And the daughters of our princes, thus  
assembled,

Stepped the measure with the gallant  
sons of France.

Hush! it might have been a Mass, and  
not a dance.

## IX

And they danced there till the blue that  
overskied us

Swooned with passion, though the  
footing seemed sedate;

And the mountains, heaving mighty  
hearts beside us,

Sighed a rapture in a shadow, to  
dilate,

And touch the holy stone where Dante  
sate.

## X

Then the sons of France bareheaded,  
lowly bowing.

Led the ladies back where kinsmen o  
the south

Stood, received them;—till, with burs  
of overflowing

Feeling . . husbands, brothers, Flor-  
ence's male youth,

Turned, and kissed the martial  
strangers' mouth to mouth.

## XI

And a cry went up, a cry from all the  
people!

—You have heard a people cheering  
you suppose,

For the Member, Mayor . . with chorus  
from the steeple!

This was different: scarce as loud  
perhaps (who knows!),

For we saw wet eyes around us ere  
the close.

## XII

And we felt as if a nation, too long  
borne in  
By hard wrongers, comprehending in  
such attitude  
That God had spoken somewhere since  
the morning,  
That men were somehow brothers,  
by no platitude,  
Cried exultant in great wonder and  
free gratitude.

## A TALE OF VILLAGRANCA

## TOLD IN TUSCANY

## I

My little son, my Florentine,  
Sit down beside my knee,  
And I will tell you why the sign  
Of joy which flushed our Italy,  
Has faded since but yesternight;  
And why your Florence of delight  
Is mourning as you see.

## II

A great man (who was crowned one day)  
Imagined a great Deed:  
He shaped it out of cloud and clay,  
He touched it finely till the seed  
Possessed the flower: from heart and  
brain  
He fed it with large thoughts humane,  
To help a people's need.

## III

He brought it out into the sun—  
They blessed it to his face:  
'O great pure Deed, that hast undone  
So many bad and base!  
O generous Deed, heroic Deed,  
Come forth, be perfected, succeed,  
Deliver by God's grace.'

## IV

Then sovereigns, statesmen, north and  
south,  
Rose up in wrath and fear,  
And cried, protesting by one mouth,  
'What monster have we here?  
A great Deed at this hour of day!  
A great just Deed—and not for pay?  
Absurd,—or insincere.

## V

'And if sincere, the heavier blow  
In that case we shall bear,  
For where's our blessed "status quo,"  
Our holy treaties, where,—  
Our rights to sell a race, or buy,  
Protect and pillage, occupy,  
And civilize despair!'

## VI

Some muttered that the great Deed  
meant  
A great pretext to sin;  
And others, the pretext, so lent,  
Was heinous (to begin).  
Volcanic terms of 'great' and 'just'?  
Admit such tongues of flame, the crust  
Of time and law falls in.

## VII

A great Deed in this world of ours?  
Unheard of the pretence is:  
It threatens plainly the great Powers;  
Is fatal in all senses.  
A just Deed in the world!—call out  
The rifles! be not slack about  
The national defences.

## VIII

And many murmured, 'From this source  
What red blood must be poured!  
And some rejoined, 'Tis even worse;  
What red tape is ignored!  
All cursed the Doer for an evil  
Called here, enlarging on the Devil,—  
There, monkeying the Lord!

## IX

Some said, it could not be explained,  
Some, could not be excused;  
And others, 'Leave it unrestrained,  
Gehenna's self is loosed.'  
And all cried, 'Crush it, maim it, gag it!  
Set dog-toothed lies to tear it ragged,  
Truncated and traduced!'

## X

But He stood sad before the sun  
(The peoples felt their fate).  
'The world is many,—I am one;  
My great Deed was too great.  
God's fruit of justice ripens slow:  
Men's souls are narrow; let them grow.  
My brothers, we must wait.'

## XI

The tale is ended, child of mine,  
 Turned graver at my knee.  
 They say your eyes, my Florentine,  
 Are English: it may be:  
 And yet I've marked as blue a pair  
 Following the doves across the square  
 At Venice by the sea.

## XII

Ah, child! ah, child! I cannot say  
 A word more. You conceive  
 The reason now, why just to-day  
 We see our Florence grieve.  
 Ah, child, look up into the sky!  
 In this low world, where great Deeds die,  
 What matter if we live?

## A COURT LADY

## I

HER hair was tawny with gold, her  
 eyes with purple were dark,  
 Her cheeks' pale opal burnt with a red  
 and restless spark.

## II

Never was lady of Milan nobler in name  
 and in race;  
 Never was lady of Italy fairer to see in  
 the face.

## III

Never was lady on earth more true as  
 woman and wife,  
 Larger in judgement and instinct, prouder  
 in manners and life.

## IV

She stood in the early morning, and  
 said to her maidens, 'Bring  
 That silken robe made ready to wear at  
 the court of the king.

## V

'Bring me the clasps of diamond, lucid,  
 clear of the mote,  
 Clasp me the large at the waist, and  
 clasp me the small at the throat.

## VI

'Diamonds to fasten the hair, and  
 diamonds to fasten the sleeves,  
 Laces to drop from their rays, like  
 a powder of snow from the eaves.'

## VII

Gorgeous she entered the sunlight  
 which gathered her up in a flame,  
 While, straight in her open carriage,  
 she to the hospital came.

## VIII

In she went at the door, and gazing  
 from end to end,  
 'Many and low are the pallets, but  
 each is the place of a friend.'

## IX

Up she passed through the wards, and  
 stood at a young man's bed:  
 Bloody the band on his brow, and livid  
 the droop of his head.

## X

'Art thou a Lombard, my brother?  
 Happy art thou, she cried,  
 And smiled like Italy on him: he  
 dreamed in her face and died.

## XI

Pale with his passing soul, she went on  
 still to a second:  
 He was a grave hard man, whose years  
 by dungeons were reckoned.

## XII

Wounds in his body were sore, wounds  
 in his life were sorer.  
 'Art thou a Romagnole?' Her eyes  
 drove lightnings before her.

## XIII

'Austrian and priest had joined to double  
 and tighten the cord  
 Able to bind thee, O strong one,—free  
 by the stroke of a sword.

## XIV

'Now be grave for the rest of us, using  
 the life overcast  
 To ripen our wine of the present, (too  
 new,) in glooms of the past.'

## XV

Down she stepped to a pallet where lay  
a face like a girl's  
Young, and pathetic with dying,—a deep  
black hole in the curls.

## XVI

'Art thou from Tuscany, brother? and  
seest thou, dreaming in pain,  
Thy mother stand in the piazza, search-  
ing the List of the slain!'

## XVII

Kind as a mother herself, she touched  
his cheeks with her hands :  
'Blessed is she who has borne thee,  
although she should weep as she  
stands.'

## XVIII

On she passed to a Frenchman, his arm  
carried off by a ball :  
Kneeling, . . 'O more than my brother!  
how shall I thank thee for all?

## XIX

'Each of the heroes around us has fought  
for his land and line,  
But *thou* hast fought for a stranger, in  
hate of a wrong not thine.

## XX

'Happy are all free peoples, too strong  
to be dispossessed.  
But blessed are those among nations, who  
dare to be strong for the rest!'

## XXI

Ever she passed on her way, and came  
to a couch where pined  
One with a face from Venetia, white with  
a hope out of mind.

## XXII

Long she stood and gazed, and twice she  
tried at the name,  
But two great crystal tears were all that  
faltered and came.

## XXIII

Only a tear for Venice!—she turned as  
in passion and loss,  
And stooped to his forehead and kissed  
it, as if she were kissing the cross.

## XXIV

Faint with that strain of heart she moved  
on then to another,  
Stern and strong in his death. 'And  
dost thou suffer, my brother?'

## XXV

Holding his hands in hers :—'Out of the  
Piedmont lion  
Cometh the sweetness of freedom!  
sweetest to live or to die on.'

## XXVI

Holding his cold rough hands,—'Well,  
oh, well have ye done  
In noble, noble Piedmont, who would  
not be noble alone.'

## XXVII

Back he fell while she spoke. She rose  
to her feet with a spring,—  
'That was a Piedmontese! and this is  
the Court of the King.'

## AN AUGUST VOICE

Una voce augusta.

MONITORE TOSCANO.

## I

You'll take back your Grand Duke!  
I made the treaty upon it.  
Just venture a quiet rebuke;  
Dall' Ongaro write him a sonnet;  
Ricasoli gently explain  
Some need of the constitution:  
He'll swear to it over again,  
Providing an 'easy solution.'  
You'll call back the Grand Duke.

## II

You'll take back your Grand Duke!  
I promised the Emperor Francis  
To argue the case by his book,  
And ask you to meet his advances.  
The Ducal cause, we know  
(Whether you or he be the wronger),  
Has very strong points;—although  
Your bayonets, there, have stronger.  
You'll call back the Grand Duke.

## III

You'll take back your Grand Duke?  
 He is not pure altogether.  
 For instance, the oath which he took  
 (In the Forty-eight rough weather)  
 He'd 'nail your flag to his mast,'  
 Then softly scuttled the boat you  
 Hoped to escape in at last,  
 And both by a 'Proprio motu.'  
 You'll call back the Grand Duke.

## IV

You'll take back your Grand Duke?  
 The scheme meets nothing to shock it  
 In this smart letter, look,  
 We found in Rådetsky's pocket;  
 Where his Highness in sprightly style  
 Of the flower of his Tuscans wrote,  
 'These heads be the hottest in file;  
 Pray shoot them the quickest.' Quote,  
 And call back the Grand Duke.

## V

You'll take back your Grand Duke?  
 There *are* some things to object to.  
 He cheated, betrayed, and forsook,  
 Then called in the foe to protect you.  
 He taxed you for wines and for meats  
 Throughout that eight years' pastime  
 Of Austria's drum in your streets—  
 Of course you remember the last time  
 You called back your Grand Duke.

## VI

You'll take back the Grand Duke?  
 It is not race he is poor in,  
 Although he never could brook  
 The patriot cousin at Turin.  
 His love of kin you discern,  
 By his hate of your flag and me—  
 So decidedly apt to turn  
 All colours at sight of the Three<sup>1</sup>.  
 You'll call back the Grand Duke.

## VII

You'll take back your Grand Duke?  
 'Twas weak that he fled from the Pitti;  
 But consider how little he shook  
 At thought of bombarding your city!  
 And, balancing that with this,

<sup>1</sup> The Italian tricolor: red, green, and white.

The Christian rule is plain for us;  
 . . Or the Holy Father's Swiss  
 Have shot his Perugians in vain for us.  
 You'll call back the Grand Duke.

## VIII

Pray take back your Grand Duke.  
 —I, too, have suffered persuasion.  
 All Europe, raven and rook,  
 Screeched at me armed for your nation.  
 Your cause in my heart struck spurs;  
 I swept such warnings aside for you:  
 My very child's eyes. and Hers,  
 Grew like my brother's who died for  
 you.  
 You'll call back the Grand Duke?

## IX

You'll take back your Grand Duke?  
 My French fought nobly with reason,—  
 Left many a Lombardy nook  
 Red as with wine out of season.  
 Little we grudged what was done there,  
 Paid freely your ransom of blood:  
 Our heroes stark in the sun there,  
 We would not recall if we could.  
 You'll call back the Grand Duke?

## X

You'll take back your Grand Duke?  
 His son rode fast as he got off  
 That day on the enemy's hook,  
 When I had an epaulette shot off.  
 Though splashed (as I saw him afar, no,  
 Near) by those ghastly rains,  
 The mark, when you've washed him in  
 Arno,  
 Will scarcely be larger than Cain's.  
 You'll call back the Grand Duke.

## XI

You'll take back your Grand Duke?  
 'Twill be so simple, quite beautiful:  
 The shepherd recovers his crook,  
 . . If you should be sheep, and dutiful.  
 I spoke a word worth chalking  
 On Milan's wall—but stay,  
 Here 's Poniatowsky talking,—  
 You'll listen to *him* to-day,  
 And call back the Grand Duke.

## XII

You'll take back your Grand Duke?  
 Observe, there's no one to force it,—  
 Unless the Madonna, St. Luke  
 Drew for you, choose to endorse it.  
 I charge you by great St. Martino  
 And prodigies quickened by wrong,  
 Remember your Dead on Ticino;  
 Be worthy, be constant, be strong.  
 —Bah!—call back the Grand Duke!!

## CHRISTMAS GIFTS

ὡς βασιλεῖ, ὡς θεῷ, ὡς νεκρῷ.

GREGORY NAZIANZEN.

## i

THE Pope on Christmas Day  
 Sits in St. Peter's chair;  
 But the peoples murmur and say,  
 'Our souls are sick and forlorn,  
 And who will show us where  
 Is the stable where Christ was born?'

## II

The star is lost in the dark;  
 The manger is lost in the straw;  
 The Christ cries faintly . . . hark! . . .  
 Through bands that swaddle and  
 strangle—  
 But the Pope in the chair of awe  
 Looks down the great quadrangle.

## III

The magi kneel at his foot,  
 Kings of the east and west,  
 But, instead of the angels (mute  
 Is the 'Peace on earth' of their song),  
 The peoples, perplexed and oppressed,  
 Are sighing, 'How long, how long?'

## IV

And, instead of the kine, bewilder in  
 Shadow of aisle and dome,  
 The bear who tore up the children,  
 The fox who burnt up the corn,  
 And the wolf who suckled at Rome  
 Brothers to slay and to scorn.

## V

Cardinals left and right of him,  
 Worshippers round and beneath,  
 The silver trumpets at sight of him  
 Thrill with a musical blast:  
 But the people say through their teeth,  
 'Trumpets! we wait for the Last!'

## VI

He sits in the place of the Lord.  
 And asks for the gifts of the time;  
 Gold, for the haft of a sword,  
 To win back Romagna averse,  
 Incense, to sweeten a crime,  
 And myrrh, to embitter a curse.

## VII

Then a king of the west said, 'Good!—  
 I bring thee the gifts of the time;  
 Red, for the patriot's blood,  
 Green, for the martyr's crown,  
 White, for the dew and the rime,  
 When the morning of God comes  
 down.'

## VIII

—O mystic tricolor bright!  
 The Pope's heart quailed like a man's:  
 The cardinals froze at the sight,  
 Bowing their tonsures hoary:  
 And the eyes in the peacock-fans  
 Winked at the alien glory.

## IX

But the peoples exclaimed in hope,  
 'Now blessed be he who has brought  
 These gifts of the time to the Pope,  
 When our souls were sick and forlorn.  
 —And *here* is the star we sought,  
 To show us where Christ was born!'

## ITALY AND THE WORLD

## I

FLORENCE, Bologna, Parma, Modena.  
 When you named them a year ago,  
 So many graves reserved by God, in a  
 Day of judgement, you seemed to know,  
 To open and let out the resurrection.

## II

And meantime (you made your reflection  
If you were English), was nought to  
be done  
But sorting sables, in predilection  
For all those martyrs dead and gone,  
Till the new earth and heaven made  
ready?

## III

And if your politics were not heady,  
Violent. . . 'Good,' you added, 'good  
In all things! mourn on sure and steady.  
Churchyard thistles are wholesome  
food  
For our European wandering asses.

## IV

'The date of the resurrection passes  
Human foreknowledge: men unborn  
Will gain by it (even in the lower  
classes),  
But none of these. It is not the morn  
Because the cock of France is crowing.

## V

'Cocks crow at midnight, seldom know-  
ing  
Starlight from dawn-light: 'tis a mad  
Poor creature.' Here you paused, and  
growing  
Scornful, . . . suddenly, let us add,  
The trumpet sounded, the graves were  
open.

## VI

Life and life and life! agrop in  
The dusk of death, warm hands,  
stretched out  
For swords, proved more life still to  
hope in,  
Beyond and behind. Arise with a  
shout,  
Nation of Italy, slain and buried!

## VII

Hill to hill and turret to turret  
Flashing the tricolor,—newly created  
Beautiful Italy, calm, unhurried,  
Rise heroic and renovated,  
Rise to the final restitution.

## VIII

Rise; prefigure the grand solution  
Of earth's municipal, insular schisms,—  
Statesmen draping self-love's conclusion  
In cheap, vernacular patriotisms,  
Unable to give up Judaea for Jesus.

## IX

Bring us the higher example; release us  
Into the larger coming time:  
And into Christ's broad garment piece us  
Rags of virtue as poor as crime,  
National selfishness, civic vaunting.

## X

No more Jew nor Greek then,—taunting  
Nor taunted;—no more England nor  
France!  
But one confederate brotherhood plant-  
ing  
One flag only, to mark the advance,  
Onward and upward, of all humanity.

## XI

For civilization perfected  
Is fully developed Christianity.  
'Measure the frontier,' shall it be said,  
'Count the ships,' in national vanity!  
—Count the nation's heart-beats sooner.

## XII

For, though behind by a cannon or  
schooner,  
That nation still is predominant,  
Whose pulse beats quickest in zeal to  
oppugn or  
Succour another, in wrong or want,  
Passing the frontier in love and abhor-  
rence.

## XIII

Modena, Parma, Bologna, Florence,  
Open us out the wider way!  
Dwarf in that chapel of old St. Lawrence  
Your Michel Angelo's giant Day,  
With the grandeur of this Day breaking  
o'er us!

## XIV

Ye who, restrained as an ancient chorus,  
Mute while the coryphaeus spake,  
Hush your separate voices before us,  
Sink your separate lives for the sake  
Of one sole Italy's living for ever!

## XV

Givers of coat and cloak too,—never  
Grudging that purple of yours at the  
best,—  
By your heroic will and endeavour  
Each sublimely dispossessed,  
That all may inherit what each sur-  
renders!

## XVI

Earth shall bless you, O noble emenders  
On egotist nations! Ye shall lead  
The plough of the world, and sow new  
splendours  
Into the furrow of things, for seed,—  
Ever the richer for what ye have given.

## XVII

Lead us and teach us, till earth and  
heaven  
Grow larger around us and higher  
above.  
Our sacrament-bread has a bitter leaven;  
We bait our traps with the name of  
love,  
Till hate itself has a kinder meaning.

## XVIII

Oh, this world: this cheating and  
screening  
Of cheats! this conscience for candle-  
wicks,  
Not beacon-fires! this overweening  
Of underhand diplomatical tricks,  
Dared for the country while scorned for  
the counter!

## XIX

Oh, this envy of those who mount here,  
And oh, this malice to make them trip!  
Rather quenching the fire there, drying  
the fount here,  
To frozen body and thirsty lip,  
Than leave to a neighbour their minis-  
tration.

## XX

I cry aloud in my poet-passion,  
Viewing my England o'er Alp and sea.  
I loved her more in her ancient fashion:  
She carries her rifles too thick for me,  
Who spares them so in the cause of a  
brother.

## XXI

Suspicion, panic? end this pother.  
The sword, kept sheathless at peace-  
time, rusts.  
None fears for himself while he feels  
for another:  
The brave man either fights or trusts,  
And wears no mail in his private chamber.

## XXII

Beautiful Italy! golden amber  
Warm with the kisses of lover and  
traitor!  
Thou who hast drawn us on to remember,  
Draw us to hope now: let us be  
greater  
By this new future than that old story.

## XXIII

Till truer glory replaces all glory,  
As the torch grows blind at the dawn  
of day;  
And the nations, rising up, their sorry  
And foolish sins shall put away,  
As children their toys when the teacher  
enters.

## XXIV

Till Love's one centre devour these  
centres  
Of many self-loves; and the patriot's  
trick  
To better his land by egotist ventures,  
Defamed from a virtue, shall make  
men sick,  
As the scalp at the belt of some red hero.

## XXV

For certain virtues have dropped to zero,  
Left by the sun on the mountain's  
dewy side;  
Churchman's charities, tender as Nero,  
Indian suttee, heathen suicide,  
Service to rights divine, proved hollow:

## XXVI

And Heptarchy patriotisms must follow.  
—National voices, distinct yet de-  
pendent,  
Enspiring each other, as swallow does  
swallow,  
With circles still widening and ever  
ascendant,  
In multiform life to united progression,—

## XXVII

These shall remain. And when, in the session  
Of nations, the separate language is heard,  
Each shall aspire, in sublime indiscretion,  
To help with a thought or exalt with a word  
Less her own than her rival's honour.

## XXVIII

Each Christian nation shall take upon her  
The law of the Christian man in vast :  
The crown of the getter shall fall to the donor,  
And last shall be first while first shall be last,  
And to love best shall still be, to reign unsurpassed.

## A CURSE FOR A NATION

## PROLOGUE

I HEARD an angel speak last night,  
And he said, 'Write!  
Write a Nation's curse for me,  
And send it over the Western Sea.'

I faltered, taking up the word :  
'Not so, my lord!  
If curses must be, choose another  
To send thy curse against my brother.

'For I am bound by gratitude,  
By love and blood,  
To brothers of mine across the sea,  
Who stretch out kindly hands to me.'

'Therefore,' the voice said, 'shalt thou write  
My curse to-night.  
From the summits of love a curse is driven,  
As lightning is from the tops of heaven.'

'Not so, I answered. 'Evermore  
My heart is sore  
For my own land's sins : for little feet  
Of children bleeding along the street :

'For parked-up honours that gainsay  
The right of way :  
For almsgiving through a door that is  
Not open enough for two friends to kiss :

'For love of freedom which abates  
Beyond the Straits :  
For patriot virtue starved to vice on  
Self-praise, self-interest, and suspicion .

'For an oligarchic parliament,  
And bribes well-meant.  
What curse to another land assign,  
When heavy-souled for the sins of mine?'

'Therefore,' the voice said, 'shalt thou write  
My curse to-night.  
Because thou hast strength to see and hate  
A foul thing done *within* thy gate.'

'Not so,' I answered once again.  
'To curse, choose men.  
For I, a woman, have only known  
How the heart melts and the tears run down.'

'Therefore,' the voice said, 'shalt thou write  
My curse to-night.  
Some women weep and curse, I say  
(And no one marvels), night and day.

'And thou shalt take their part to-night,  
Weep and write.  
A curse from the depths of womanhood  
Is very salt, and bitter, and good.'

So thus I wrote, and mourned indeed,  
What all may read.  
And thus, as was enjoined on me,  
I send it over the Western Sea.

## THE CURSE

## I

BECAUSE ye have broken your own chain  
With the strain  
Of brave men climbing a Nation's height,  
Yet thence bear down with brand and thong  
On souls of others,—for this wrong  
This is the curse. Write.

Because yourselves are standing straight  
 In the state  
 Of Freedom's foremost acolyte,  
 Yet keep calm footing all the time  
 On writhing bond-slaves,—for this crime  
 This is the curse. Write.

Because ye prosper in God's name,  
 With a claim  
 To honour in the old world's sight,  
 Yet do the fiend's work perfectly  
 In strangling martyrs,—for this lie  
 This is the curse. Write.

## II

Ye shall watch while kings conspire  
 Round the people's smouldering fire,  
 And, warm for your part,  
 Shall never dare—O shame!  
 To utter the thought into flame  
 Which burns at your heart.  
 This is the curse. Write.

Ye shall watch while nations strive  
 With the bloodhounds, die or survive,  
 Drop faint from their jaws,  
 Or throttle them backward to death,  
 And only under your breath  
 Shall favour the cause.  
 This is the curse. Write.

Ye shall watch while strong men draw  
 The nets of feudal law  
 To strangle the weak.

And, counting the sin for a sin,  
 Your soul shall be sadder within  
 Than the word ye shall speak.  
 This is the curse. Write.

When good men are praying erect  
 That Christ may avenge His elect  
 And deliver the earth,  
 The prayer in your ears, said low,  
 Shall sound like the tramp of a foe  
 That's driving you forth.  
 This is the curse. Write.

When wise men give you their praise,  
 They shall pause in the heat of the phrase,  
 As if carried too far.

When ye boast your own charters kept  
 true,  
 Ye shall blush;—for the thing which ye do  
 Derides what ye are.  
 This is the curse. Write.

When fools cast taunts at your gate,  
 Your scorn ye shall somewhat abate  
 As ye look o'er the wall,  
 For your conscience, tradition, and name  
 Explode with a deadlier blame  
 Than the worst of them all.  
 This is the curse. Write.

Go, wherever ill deeds shall be done,  
 Go, plant your flag in the sun  
 Beside the ill-doers!  
 And recoil from clenching the curse  
 Of God's witnessing Universe  
 With a curse of yours.  
 This is the curse. Write.

# LAST POEMS

TO 'GRATEFUL FLORENCE'

TO THE MUNICIPALITY, HER REPRESENTATIVE

AND TO TOMMASEO, ITS SPOKESMAN

MOST GRATEFULLY

## ADVERTISEMENT TO THE FIRST EDITION

THESE Poems are given as they occur on a list drawn up last June. A few had already been printed in periodicals.

There is hardly such direct warrant for publishing the Translations; which were only intended, many years ago, to accompany and explain certain Engravings after ancient Gems, in the projected work of

a friend, by whose kindness they are now recovered: but as two of the original series (the *Adonis* of Bion, and 'Song of the Rose' from Achilles Tatius) have subsequently appeared, it is presumed that the remainder may not improperly follow.

A single recent version is added.

LONDON, *February*, 1862.

## LAST POEMS

### LITTLE MATTIE

#### I

DEAD! Thirteen a month ago!

Short and narrow her life's walk;  
Lover's love she could not know

Even by a dream or talk:

Too young to be glad of youth,

Missing honour, labour, rest,  
And the warmth of a babe's mouth

At the blossom of her breast.

Must you pity her for this

And for all the loss it is,

You, her mother, with wet face,

Having had all in your case?

#### II

Just so young but yesternight,

Now she is as old as death.

Meek, obedient in your sight,

Gentle to a beck or breath

Only on last Monday! Yours,

Answering you like silver bells

Lightly touched! An hour matures:

You can teach her nothing else.

She has seen the mystery hid

Under Egypt's pyramid:

By those eyelids pale and close

Now she knows what Rhamses knows.

#### III

Cross her quiet hands, and smooth

Down her patient locks of silk,

Cold and passive as in truth

You your fingers in spilt milk

Drew along a marble floor;

But her lips you cannot wring

Into saying a word more,

'Yes,' or 'No,' or such a thing:

Though you call and beg and wreak

Half your soul out in a shriek,

She will lie there in default

And most innocent revolt.

## IV

Aye, and if she spoke, may be  
 She would answer like the Son,  
 'What is now 'twixt thee and me?'  
 Dreadful answer! better none.  
 Yours on Monday, God's to-day!  
 Yours, your child, your blood, your  
 heart,  
 Called . . . you called her, did you say:  
 'Little Mattie' for your part?  
 Now already it sounds strange,  
 And you wonder, in this change,  
 What He calls His angel-creature,  
 Higher up than you can reach her.

## V

'Twas a green and easy world  
 As she took it; room to play  
 (Though one's hair might get uncured  
 At the far end of the day).  
 What she suffered she shook off  
 In the sunshine; what she sinned  
 She could pray on high enough  
 To keep safe above the wind.  
 If reproved by God or you,  
 'Twas to better her, she knew;  
 And if crossed, she gathered still  
 'Twas to cross out something ill.

## VI

You, you had the right, you thought,  
 To survey her with sweet scorn,  
 Poor gay child, who had not caught  
 Yet the octave-stretch forlorn  
 Of your larger wisdom! Nay,  
 Now your places are changed so,  
 In that same superior way  
 She regards you dull and low  
 As you did herself exempt  
 From life's sorrows. Grand contempt  
 Of the spirits risen awhile,  
 Who look back with such a smile!

## VII

There's the sting of't. That, I think,  
 Hurts the most a thousandfold!  
 To feel sudden, at a wink,  
 Some dear child we used to scold,  
 Praise, love both ways, kiss and tease,  
 Teach and tumble as our own,  
 All its curls about our knees,  
 Rise up suddenly full-grown.

Who could wonder such a sight  
 Made a woman mad outright?  
 Show me Michael with the sword  
 Rather than such angels, Lord!

## A FALSE STEP

## I

SWEET, thou hast trod on a heart.  
 Pass! there's a world full of men;  
 And women as fair as thou art  
 Must do such things now and then.

## II

Thou only hast stepped unaware,—  
 Malice, not one can impute;  
 And why should a heart have been there  
 In the way of a fair woman's foot?

## III

It was not a stone that could trip,  
 Nor was it a thorn that could read:  
 Put up thy proud underlip!  
 'Twas merely the heart of a friend.

## IV

And yet peradventure one day  
 Thou, sitting alone at the glass,  
 Remarking the bloom gone away,  
 Where the smile in its implement was,

## V

And seeking around thee in vain  
 From hundreds who flattered before,  
 Such a word as, 'Oh, not in the main  
 Do I hold thee less precious, but  
 more!'

## VI

Thou'lt sigh, very like, on thy part,  
 'Of all I have known or can know,  
 I wish I had only that Heart  
 I trod upon ages ago!'

## VOID IN LAW

## I

SLEEP, little babe, on my knee,  
 Sleep, for the midnight is chill,  
 And the moon has died out in the tree,  
 And the great human world goeth ill.  
 Sleep, for the wicked agree:  
 Sleep, let them do as they will.  
 Sleep.

## II

Sleep, thou hast drawn from my breast  
 The last drop of milk that was good ;  
 And now, in a dream, suck the rest,  
 Lest the real should trouble thy blood.  
 Suck, little lips dispossessed,  
 As we kiss in the air whom we would.  
 Sleep.

## III

O lips of thy father ! the same,  
 So like ! Very deeply they swore  
 When he gave me his ring and his name,  
 To take back, I imagined, no more !  
 And now is all changed like a game,  
 Though the old cards are used as of  
 yore !  
 Sleep.

## IV

'Void in law,' said the Courts. Some-  
 thing wrong  
 In the forms ? Yet, 'Till death part  
 us two,  
 I, James, take thee, Jessie,' was strong,  
 And ONE witness competent. True  
 Such a marriage was worth an old song,  
 Heard in Heaven though, as plain as  
 the New.  
 Sleep.

## V

Sleep, little child, his and mine !  
 Her throat has the antelope curve,  
 And her cheek just the colour and line  
 Which fade not before him nor swerve :  
 Yet *she* has no child !—the divine  
 Seal of right upon loves that deserve.  
 Sleep.

## VI

My child ! though the world take her part,  
 Saying, 'She was the woman to choose,  
 He had eyes, was a man in his heart,'—  
 We twain the decision refuse :  
 We . . . weak as I am, as thou art, . . .  
 Cling on to him, never to loose.  
 Sleep.

## VII

He thinks that, when done with this  
 place,  
 All's ended ! he'll new-stamp the ore ?  
 Yes, Caesar's—but not in our case.  
 Let him learn we are waiting before

The grave's mouth, the heaven's gate,  
 God's face,  
 With implacable love evermore.  
 Sleep.

## VIII

He's ours, though he kissed her but now ;  
 He's ours, though she kissed in reply ;  
 He's ours, though himself disavow,  
 And God's universe favour the lie ;  
 Ours to claim, ours to clasp, ours below,  
 Ours above, . . . if we live, if we die.  
 Sleep.

## IX

Ah, baby, my baby, too rough  
 Is my lullaby ? What have I said !  
 Sleep ! When I've wept long enough  
 I shall learn to weep softly instead,  
 And piece with some alien stuff  
 My heart to lie smooth for thy head.  
 Sleep.

## X

Two souls met upon thee, my sweet ;  
 Two loves led thee out to the sun :  
 Alas, pretty hands, pretty feet,  
 If the one who remains (only one)  
 Set her grief at thee, turned in a heat  
 To thine enemy,—were it well done !  
 Sleep.

## XI

May He of the manger stand near  
 And love thee ! An infant He came  
 To His own who rejected Him here,  
 But the Magi brought gifts all the same  
 I hurry the cross on my Dear !  
 My gifts are the griefs I declaim !  
 Sleep.

## LORD WALTER'S WIFE

## I

'But why do you go,' said the lady,  
 while both sate under the yew,  
 And her eyes were alive in their depth,  
 as the kraken beneath the sea-  
 blue.

## II

'Because I fear you,' he answered ;—  
 'because you are far too fair,  
 And able to strangle my soul in a mesh  
 of your gold-coloured hair.'

## III

'Oh, that,' she said, 'is no reason! Such knots are quickly undone, And too much beauty, I reckon, is nothing but too much sun.'

## IV

'Yet farewell so,' he answered;—'the sunstroke's fatal at times. I value your husband, Lord Walter, whose gallop rings still from the limes.'

## V

Oh, that,' she said, 'is no reason. You smell a rose through a fence: If two should smell it, what matter? who grumbles, and where's the pretence?'

## VI

'But I,' he replied, 'have promised another, when love was free, To love her alone, alone, who alone and afar loves me.'

## VII

'Why, that,' she said, 'is no reason. Love's always free, I am told. Will you vow to be safe from the headache on Tuesday, and think it will hold?'

## VIII

'But you,' he replied, 'have a daughter, a young little child, who was laid In your lap to be pure; so I leave you: the angels would make me afraid.'

## IX

'Oh, that,' she said, 'is no reason. The angels keep out of the way; And Dora, the child, observes nothing, although you should please me and stay.'

## X

At which he rose up in his anger,— 'Why, now, you no longer are fair! Why, now, you no longer are fatal, but ugly and hateful, I swear.'

## XI

At which she laughed out in her scorn.— 'These men! Oh, these men over-nice, Who are shocked if a colour not virtuous, is frankly put on by a vice.'

## XII

Her eyes blazed upon him.—'And you! You bring us your vices so near That we smell them! You think in our presence a thought 'twould defame us to hear!'

## XIII

'What reason had you, and what right, —I appeal to your soul from my life,— To find me too fair as a woman? Why, sir, I am pure, and a wife.'

## XIV

'Is the day-star too fair up above you? It burns you not. Dare you imply I brushed you more close than the star does, when Walter had set me as high?'

## XV

'If a man finds a woman too fair, he means simply adapted too much To uses unlawful and fatal. The praise! —shall I thank you for such?'

## XVI

'Too fair?—not unless you misuse us! and surely if, once in a while, You attain to it, straightway you call us no longer too fair, but too vile.'

## XVII

'A moment,—I pray your attention!—I have a poor word in my head I must utter, though womanly custom would set it down better unsaid.'

## XVIII

'You grew, sir, pale to impertinence, once when I showed you a ring. You kissed my fan when I dropped it. No matter!—I've broken the thing.'

## XIX

'You did me the honour, perhaps, to be moved at my side now and then  
In the senses—a vice, I have heard,  
which is common to beasts and  
some men.

## XX

'Love's a virtue for heroes!—as white  
as the snow on high hills,  
And immortal as every great soul is that  
struggles, endures, and fulfils.

## XXI

'I love my Walter profoundly,—you,  
Maude, though you faltered a  
week,  
For the sake of . . . what was it? an eye-  
brow? or, less still, a mole on a  
cheek?

## XXII

'And since, when all's said, you're too  
noble to stoop to the frivolous cant  
About crimes irresistible, virtues that  
swindle, betray and supplant,

## XXIII

'I determined to prove to yourself that,  
whate'er you might dream or avow  
By illusion, you wanted precisely no  
more of me than you have now.

## XXIV

'There! Look me full in the face!—in  
the face. Understand, if you can,  
That the eyes of such women as I am,  
are clean as the palm of a man.

## XXV

'Drop his hand, you insult him. Avoid  
us for fear we should cost you  
a scar—  
You take us for harlots, I tell you, and  
not for the women we are.

## XXVI

'You wronged me: but then I con-  
sidered . . . there's Walter! And  
so at the end,  
I vowed that he should not be mulcted,  
by me, in the hand of a friend.

## XXVII

'Have I hurt you indeed? We are quits  
then. Nay, friend of my Walter,  
be mine!  
Come Dora, my darling, my angel, and  
help me to ask him to dine.'

# BIANCA AMONG THE NIGHTIN- GALES

## I

THE cypress stood up like a church  
That night we felt our love would hold,  
And saintly moonlight seemed to search  
And wash the whole world clean as  
gold;  
The olives crystallized the vales'  
Broad slopes until the hills grew strong:  
The fireflies and the nightingales  
Throbbled each to either, flame and  
song.  
The nightingales, the nightingales.

## II

Upon the angle of its shade  
The cypress stood, self-balanced high;  
Half up, half down, as double-made,  
Along the ground, against the sky.  
And *we*, too! from such soul-height went  
Such leaps of blood, so blindly driven,  
We scarce knew if our nature meant  
Most passionate earth or intense  
heaven.  
The nightingales, the nightingales.

## III

We paled with love, we shook with love,  
We kissed so close we could not vow;  
Till Giulio whispered, 'Sweet, above  
God's Ever guarantees this Now.'  
And through his words the nightingales  
Drove straight and full their long clear  
call,  
Like arrows through heroic mails,  
And love was awful in it all.  
The nightingales, the nightingales.

## IV

O cold white moonlight of the north,  
Refresh these pulses, quench this hell!  
O coverture of death drawn forth  
Across this garden-chamber . . . well!

But what have nightingales to do  
In gloomy England, called the free . .  
(Yes, free to die in! . .) when we two  
Are sundered, singing still to me?  
And still they sing, the nightingales.

v

I think I hear him, how he cried  
'My own soul's life' between their  
notes.  
Each man has but one soul supplied,  
And that's immortal. Though his  
throat's  
On fire with passion now, to *her*  
He can't say what to me he said!  
And yet he moves her, they aver.  
Thenightingales sing through my head.  
The nightingales, the nightingales.

vi

He says to *her* what moves her most.  
He would not name his soul within  
Her hearing,—rather pays her cost  
With praises to her lips and chin.  
Man has but one soul, 'tis ordained,  
And each soul but one love, I add;  
Yet souls are damned and love's profaned  
These nightingales will sing me mad!  
The nightingales, the nightingales.

vii

I marvel how the birds can sing.  
There's little difference, in their view,  
Betwixt our Tuscan trees that spring  
As vital flames into the blue,  
And dull round blots of foliage meant  
Like saturated sponges here  
To suck the fogs up. As content  
Is *he* too in this land, 'tis clear.  
And still they sing, the nightingales.

viii

My native Florence! dear, forgone!  
I see across the Alpine ridge  
How the last feast-day of Saint John  
Shot rockets from Carraia bridge.  
The luminous city, tall with fire,  
Trode deep down in that river of ours.  
While many a boat with lamp and choir  
Skimmed birdlike over glittering  
towers.  
I will not hear these nightingales.

ix

I seem to float, *we* seem to float  
Down Arno's stream in festive guise;  
A boat strikes flame into our boat,  
And up that lady seems to rise  
As then she rose. The shock had flashed  
A vision on us! What a head,  
'What leaping eyeballs!'—beauty dashed  
To splendour by a sudden dread.  
And still they sing, the nightingales.

x

Too bold to sin, too weak to die;  
Such women are so. As for me,  
'Would we had drowned there, he and I,  
That moment, loving perfectly.  
He had not caught her with her loosed  
Gold ringlets . . rarer in the south . .  
Nor heard the 'Grazie tanto' bruised  
To sweetness by her English mouth.  
And still they sing, the nightingales.

xi

She had not reached him at my heart  
With her fine tongue, as snakes indeed  
Kill flies; nor had I, for my part,  
Yearned after, in my desperate need,  
And followed him as he did her  
To coasts left bitter by the tide,  
Whose very nightingales, elsewhere  
Delighting, torture and deride!  
For still they sing, the nightingales.

xii

A worthless woman! mere cold clay  
As all false things are! but so fair,  
She takes the breath of men away  
Who gaze upon her unaware.  
I would not play her larcenous tricks  
To have her looks! She lied and stole,  
And spat into my love's pure pyx  
The rank saliva of her soul.  
And still they sing, the nightingales.

xiii

I would not for her white and pink,  
Though such he likes—her grace of  
limb,  
Though such he has praised—nor yet,  
I think,  
For life itself, though spent with him,

Commit such sacrilege, affront  
 God's nature which is love, intrude  
 'Twixt two affianced souls, and hunt  
 Like spiders, in the altar's wood.  
 I cannot bear these nightingales.

## xiv

If she chose sin, some gentler guise  
 She might have sinned in, so it seems :  
 She might have pricked out both my eyes,  
 And I still seen him in my dreams !  
 —Or drugged me in my soup or wine,  
 Nor left me angry afterward :  
 To die here with his hand in mine  
 His breath upon me, were not hard.  
 (Our Lady hush these nightingales !)

## xv

But set a springe for *him*, 'mio ben,'  
 My only good, my first last love !—  
 Though Christ knows well what sin is,  
 when

He sees some things done they must  
 move

Himself to wonder. Let her pass.  
 I think of her by night and day.  
 Must I too join her . . . out, alas ! . . .  
 With Giulio, in each word I say !  
 And evermore the nightingales !

## xvi

Giulio, my Giulio !—sing they so,  
 And you be silent ? Do I speak,  
 And you not hear ? An arm you throw  
 Round some one, and I feel so weak ?  
 —Oh, owl-like birds ! They sing for spite,  
 They sing for hate, they sing for doom !  
 They'll sing through death who sing  
 through night,  
 They'll sing and stun me in the tomb—  
 The nightingales, the nightingales !

## MY KATE.

## I

SHE was not as pretty as women I know,  
 And yet all your best made of sunshine  
 and snow  
 Drop to shade, melt to nought in the  
 long-trodden ways,  
 While she's still remembered on warm  
 and cold days—

My Kate.

## II

Her air had a meaning, her movements  
 a grace ;  
 You turned from the fairest to gaze on  
 her face :  
 And when you had once seen her fore-  
 head and mouth,  
 You saw as distinctly her soul and her  
 truth—

My Kate.

## III

Such a blue inner light from her eyelids  
 outbroke,  
 You looked at her silence and fancied  
 she spoke :  
 When she did, so peculiar yet soft was  
 the tone,  
 Though the loudest spoke also, you heard  
 her alone—

My Kate.

## iv

I doubt if she said to you much that  
 could act  
 As a thought or suggestion : she did not  
 attract  
 In the sense of the brilliant or wise :  
 I infer  
 'Twas her thinking of others, made you  
 think of her—

My Kate.

## v

She never found fault with you, never  
 implied  
 Your wrong by her right ; and yet men  
 at her side  
 Grew nobler, girls purer, as through the  
 whole town  
 The children were gladder that pulled  
 at her gown—

My Kate.

## vi

None knelt at her feet confessed lovers  
 in thrall ;  
 They knelt more to God than they used,  
 —that was all :  
 If you praised her as charming, some  
 asked what you meant,  
 But the charm of her presence was felt  
 when she went—

My Kate.

## VII

The weak and the gentle, the ribald and rude,  
 She took as she found them, and did them all good;  
 It always was so with her—see what you have!  
 She has made the grass greener even here . . with her grave—

My Kate.

## VIII

My dear one!—when thou wast alive with the rest,  
 I held thee the sweetest and loved thee the best:  
 And now thou art dead, shall I not take thy part  
 As thy smiles used to do for thyself, my sweet Heart—

My Kate?

### A SONG FOR THE RAGGED SCHOOLS OF LONDON

#### WRITTEN IN ROME

## I

I AM listening here in Rome.  
 'England's strong,' say many speakers,  
 'If she winks, the Czar must come,  
 Prow and topsail, to the breakers.'

## II

'England's rich in coal and oak,'  
 Adds a Roman, getting moody,  
 'If she shakes a travelling cloak,  
 Down our Appian roll the scudi.'

## . . . III

'England's righteous,' they rejoin,  
 'Who shall grudge her exaltations,  
 When her wealth of golden coin  
 Works the welfare of the nations?'

## IV

I am listening here in Rome.  
 Over Alps a voice is sweeping—  
 'England's cruel! save us some  
 Of these victims in her keeping!'

## V

As the cry beneath the wheel  
 Of an old triumphal Roman  
 Cleft the people's shouts like steel,  
 While the show was spoilt for no man,

## VI

Comes that voice. Let others shout,  
 Other poets praise my land here:  
 I am sadly sitting out,  
 Praying, 'God forgive her grandeur.'

## VII

Shall we boast of empire, where  
 Time with ruin sits commissioned?  
 In God's liberal blue air  
 Peter's dome itself looks wizened;

## VIII

And the mountains, in disdain,  
 Gather back their lights of opal  
 From the dumb, despondent plain,  
 Heaped with jawbones of a people.

## IX

Lordly English, think it o'er,  
 Caesar's doing is all undone!  
 You have cannons on your shore,  
 And free parliaments in London,

## X

Princes' parks, and merchants' homes,  
 Tents for soldiers, ships for seamen,—  
 Aye, but ruins worse than Rome's  
 In your pauper men and women.

## XI

Women leering through the gas  
 (Just such bosoms used to nurse you),  
 Men, turned wolves by famine—pass!  
 Those can speak themselves, and curse you.

## XII

But these others—children small,  
 Spilt like blots about the city,  
 Quay, and street, and palace-wall—  
 Take them up into your pity!

## XIII

Ragged children with bare feet,  
 Whom the angels in white raiment  
 Know the names of, to repeat  
 When they come on you for payment.

## XIV

Ragged children, hungry-eyed,  
 Huddled up out of the coldness  
 On your doorsteps, side by side,  
 Till your footman damns their boldness.

## XV

In the alleys, in the squares,  
 Begging, lying little rebels;  
 In the noisy thoroughfares,  
 Struggling on with piteous trebles.

## XVI

Patient children—think what pain  
 Makes a young child patient—ponder!  
 Wronged too commonly to strain  
 After right, or wish, or wonder.

## XVII

Wicked children, with peaked chins,  
 And old foreheads! there are many  
 With no pleasures except sins,  
 Gambling with a stolen penny.

## XVIII

Sickly children, that whine low  
 To themselves and not their mothers,  
 From mere habit,—never so  
 Hoping help or care from others.

## XIX

Healthy children, with those blue  
 English eyes, fresh from their Maker,  
 Fierce and ravenous, staring through  
 At the brown loaves of the baker.

## XX

I am listening here in Rome,  
 And the Romans are confessing,  
 'English children pass in bloom  
 All the prettiest made for blessing.

## XXI

'*Angli angeli!*' (resumed)  
 From the mediaeval story)  
 'Such rose angelhoods, emplumed  
 In such ringlets of pure glory!'

## XXII

Can we smooth down the bright hair,  
 O my sisters, calm, unthrilled in  
 Our heart's pulses? Can we bear  
 The sweet looks of our own children,

## XXIII

While those others, lean and small,  
 Scurf and mildew of the city,  
 Spot our streets, convict us all  
 Till we take them into pity!

## XXIV

'Is it our fault?' you reply,  
 'When, throughout civilization,  
 Every nation's empery  
 Is asserted by starvation?'

## XXV

'All these mouths we cannot feed,  
 And we cannot clothe these bodies.'  
 Well, if man's so hard indeed,  
 Let them learn at least what God is!

## XXVI

Little outcasts from life's fold,  
 The grave's hope they may be joined in,  
 By Christ's covenant consoled  
 For our social contract's grinding.

## XXVII

If no better can be done,  
 Let us do but this,—endeavour  
 That the sun behind the sun  
 Shine upon them while they shiver!

## XXVIII

On the dismal London flags,  
 Through the cruel social juggle,  
 Put a thought beneath their rags  
 To ennoble the heart's struggle.

## XXIX

O my sisters, not so much  
 Are we asked for—not a blossom  
 From our children's nosegay, such  
 As we gave it from our bosom,—

## XXX

Not the milk left in their cup,  
 Not the lamp while they are sleeping,  
 Not the little cloak hung up  
 While the coat's in daily keeping,—

## XXXI

But a place in RAGGED SCHOOLS,  
 Where the outcasts may to-morrow  
 Learn by gentle words and rules  
 Just the uses of their sorrow.

## XXXII

O my sisters! children small,  
 Blue-eyed, wailing through the city—  
 Our own babes cry in them all:  
 Let us take them into pity.

## MAY'S LOVE

## I

You love all, you say,  
Round, beneath, above me :  
Find me then some way  
Better than to love me,  
Me, too, dearest May !

## II

O world-kissing eyes  
Which the blue heavens melt to !  
I, sad, otherwise,  
Loathe the sweet looks dealt to  
All things—men and flies.

## III

You love all, you say :  
Therefore, Dear, abate me  
Just your love, I pray !  
Shut your eyes and hate me—  
Only *me*—fair May !

## AMY'S CRUELTY

## I

FAIR Amy of the terraced house,  
Assist me to discover  
Why you who would not hurt a mouse  
Can torture so your lover.

## II

You give your coffee to the cat,  
You stroke the dog for coming,  
And all your face grows kinder at  
The little brown bee's humming.

## III

But when *he* haunts your door . . the town  
Marks coming and marks going . .  
You seem to have stitched your eyelids  
down  
To that long piece of sewing !

## IV

You never give a look, not you,  
Nor drop him a ' Good morning,'  
To keep his long day warm and blue,  
So fretted by your scorning.

## V

She shook her head—' The mouse and  
bee  
For crumb or flower will linger :  
The dog is happy at my knee,  
The cat purrs at my finger.

## VI

' But *he* . . to *him*, the least thing given  
Means great things at a distance ;  
He wants my world, my sun, my heaven,  
Soul, body, whole existence.

## VII

' They say love gives as well as takes ;  
But I'm a simple maiden,—  
My mother's first smile when she wakes  
I still have smiled and prayed in.

## VIII

' I only know my mother's love  
Which gives all and asks nothing ;  
And this new loving sets the groove  
Too much the way of loathing.

## IX

' Unless he gives me all in change,  
I forfeit all things by him :  
The risk is terrible and strange—  
I tremble, doubt, . . deny him.

## X

' He's sweetest friend, or hardest foe,  
Best angel, or worst devil ;  
I either hate or . . love him so,  
I can't be merely civil !

## XI

' You trust a woman who puts forth,  
Her blossoms thick as summer's ?  
You think she dreams what love is worth,  
Who casts it to new-comers ?

## XII

' Such love 's a cowslip-ball to fling,  
A moment's pretty pastime ;  
I give . . all me, if anything,  
The first time and the last time.

## XIII

' Dear neighbour of the trellised house,  
A man should murmur never,  
Though treated worse than dog and  
mouse,  
Till doted on for ever !'

## MY HEART AND I

## I

ENOUGH! we're tired, my heart and I.  
 We sit beside the headstone thus,  
 And wish that name were carved for us.  
 The moss reprints more tenderly  
 The hard types of the mason's knife,  
 As heaven's sweet life renews earth's  
 life  
 With which we're tired, my heart and I.

## II

You see we're tired, my heart and I.  
 We dealt with books, we trusted men,  
 And in our own blood drenched the  
 pen,  
 As if such colours could not fly.  
 We walked too straight for fortune's  
 end,  
 We loved too true to keep a friend;  
 At last we're tired, my heart and I.

## III

How tired we feel, my heart and I!  
 We seem of no use in the world;  
 Our fancies hang grey and uncured  
 About men's eyes indifferently;  
 Our voice which thrilled you so, will  
 let  
 You sleep; our tears are only wet:  
 What do we here, my heart and I?

## IV

So tired, so tired, my heart and I!  
 It was not thus in that old time  
 When Ralph sate with me 'neath the  
 lime  
 To watch the sunset from the sky.  
 'Dear love, you're looking tired,' he  
 said;  
 I, smiling at him, shook my head:  
 'Tis now we're tired, my heart and I.

## V

So tired, so tired, my heart and I!  
 Though now none takes me on his arm  
 To fold me close and kiss me warm  
 Till each quick breath end in a sigh  
 Of happy languor. Now, alone,  
 We lean upon this graveyard stone,  
 Uncheered, unloved, my heart and I.

## VI

Tired out we are, my heart and I.  
 Suppose the world brought diadems  
 To tempt us, crusted with loose gems  
 Of powers and pleasures? Let it try.  
 We scarcely care to look at even  
 A pretty child, or God's blue heaven,  
 We feel so tired, my heart and I.

## VII

Yet who complains? My heart and I!  
 In this abundant earth no doubt  
 Is little room for things worn out:  
 Disdain them, break them, throw them by.  
 And if before the days grew rough  
 We *once* were loved, used,—well  
 enough,  
 I think, we've fared, my heart and I.

THE BEST THING IN THE  
WORLD

WHAT'S the best thing in the world?  
 June-rose, by May-dew impearled;  
 Sweet south-wind, that means no rain;  
 Truth, not cruel to a friend;  
 Pleasure, not in haste to end;  
 Beauty, not self-decked and curled  
 Till its pride is over-plain;  
 Light, that never makes you wink;  
 Memory, that gives no pain;  
 Love, when, so, you're loved again.  
 What's the best thing in the world?  
 —Something out of it, I think.

## WHERE'S AGNES?

## I

NAY, if I had come back so,  
 And found her dead in her grave,  
 And if a friend I know  
 Had said, 'Be strong, nor rave:  
 She lies there, dead below:

## II

'I saw her, I who speak,  
 White, stiff, the face one blank:  
 The blue shade came to her cheek  
 Before they nailed the plank,  
 For she had been dead a week.'

## III

Why, if he had spoken so,  
I might have believed the thing,  
Although her look, although  
Her step, laugh, voice's ring  
Lived in me still as they do.

## IV

But dead that other way,  
Corrupted thus and lost?  
That sort of worm in the clay?  
I cannot count the cost,  
That I should rise and pay.

## V

My Agnes false? such shame!  
She? Rather be it said  
That the pure saint of her name  
Has stood there in her stead,  
And tricked you to this blame.

## VI

Her very gown, her cloak  
Fell chastely: no disguise,  
But expression! while she broke  
With her clear grey morning-eyes  
Full upon me and then spoke.

## VII

She wore her hair away  
From her forehead,—like a cloud  
Which a little wind in May  
Peels off finely: disallowed  
Though bright enough to stay.

## VIII

For the heavens must have the place  
To themselves, to use and shine in,  
As her soul would have her face  
To press through upon mine, in  
That orb of angel grace.

## IX

Had she any fault at all,  
'Twas having none, I thought too—  
There seemed a sort of thrall;  
As she felt her shadow ought to  
Fall straight upon the wall.

## X

Her sweetness strained the sense  
Of common life and duty;  
And every day's expense  
Of moving in such beauty  
Required, almost, defence.

## XI

What good, I thought, is done  
By such sweet things, if any?  
This world smells ill i' the sun  
Though the garden-flowers are  
many,—  
*She* is only one.

## XII

Can a voice so low and soft  
Take open actual part  
With Right,—maintain aloft  
Pure truth in life or art,  
Vexed always, wounded oft!—

## XIII

*She* fit, with that fair pose  
Which melts from curve to curve,  
To stand, run, work with those  
Who wrestle and deserve,  
And speak plain without glose?

## XIV

But I turned round on my fear  
Defiant, disagreeing—  
What if God has set her here  
Less for action than for Being?—  
For the eye and for the ear.

## XV

Just to show what beauty may,  
Just to prove what music can,—  
And then to die away  
From the presence of a man,  
Who shall learn, henceforth, to pray?

## XVI

As a door, left half ajar  
In heaven, would make him think  
How heavenly-different are  
Things glanced at through the chink,  
Till he pined from near to far.

## XVII

That door could lead to hell?  
That shining merely meant  
Damnation? What! *She* fell  
Like a woman, who was sent  
Like an angel, by a spell?

## XVIII

*She*, who scarcely trod the earth,  
Turned mere dirt! My Agnes,—mine!  
Called so! felt of too much worth  
To be used so! too divine  
To be breathed near, and so forth!

## XIX

Why, I dared not name a sin  
In her presence: I went round,  
Clipped its name and shut it in  
Some mysterious crystal sound,—  
Changed the dagger for the pin.

## XX

Now you name herself *that word*?  
O my Agnes! O my saint!  
Then the great joys of the Lord  
Do not last? Then all this paint  
Runs off nature? leaves a board?

## XXI

Who's dead here? No, not she:  
Rather I! or whence this damp  
Cold corruption's misery?  
While my very mourners stamp  
Closer in the clods on me.

## XXII

And my mouth is full of dust  
Till I cannot speak and curse—  
Speak and damn him . . . 'Blame's  
unjust'?  
Sin blots out the universe,  
All because she would and must?

## XXIII

She, my white rose, dropping off  
The high rose-tree branch! and not  
That the night-wind blew too rough,  
Or the noon-sun burnt too hot,  
But, that being a rose—'twas enough!

## XXIV

Then henceforth, may earth grow trees!  
No more roses!—hard straight lines  
To score lies out! none of these  
Fluctuant curves! but firs and pines,  
Poplars, cedars, cypresses!

## DE PROFUNDIS

## I

THE face which, duly as the sun,  
Rose up for me with life begun,  
To mark all bright hours of the day  
With hourly love, is dimmed away,—  
And yet my days go on, go on.

## II

The tongue which, like a stream, could run  
Smooth music from the roughest stone,  
And every morning with 'Good day'  
Make each day good, is hushed away,—  
And yet my days go on, go on.

## III

The heart which, like a staff, was one  
For mine to lean and rest upon,  
The strongest on the longest day  
With steadfast love, is caught away,—  
And yet my days go on, go on.

## IV

And cold before my summer's done,  
And deaf in Nature's general tune,  
And fallen too low for special fear,  
And here, with hope no longer here,—  
While the tears drop, my days go on.

## V

The world goes whispering to its own,  
'This anguish pierces to the bone';  
And tender friends go sighing round,  
'What love can ever cure this wound?'  
My days go on, my days go on.

## VI

The past rolls forward on the sun  
And makes all night. O dreams begun,  
Not to be ended! Ended bliss,  
And life that will not end in this!  
My days go on, my days go on.

## VII

Breath freezes on my lips to moan:  
As one alone, once not alone,  
I sit and knock at Nature's door,  
Heart-bare, heart-hungry, very poor,  
Whose desolated days go on.

## VIII

I knock and cry,—Undone, undone!  
Is there no help, no comfort,—none?  
No gleaning in the wide wheat-plains  
Where others drive their loaded wains?  
My vacant days go on, go on.

## IX

This Nature, though the snows be down,  
Thinks kindly of the bird of June:  
The little red hip on the tree  
Is ripe for such. What is for me,  
Whose days so wintery go on?

## X

No bird am I, to sing in June,  
And dare not ask an equal boon.  
Good nests and berries red are Nature's  
To give away to better creatures,—  
And yet my days go on, go on.

## XI

I ask less kindness to be done,—  
Only to loose these pilgrim-shoon  
(Too early worn and grimed), with sweet  
Cool deathly touch to these tired feet,  
Till days go out which now go on.

## XII

Only to lift the turf unmown  
From off the earth where it has grown,  
Some cubit-space, and say, ' Behold,  
Creep in, poor Heart, beneath that fold,  
Forgetting how the days go on.'

## XIII

What harm would that do ? Green anon  
The sward would quicken, overshone  
By skies as blue ; and crickets might  
Have leave to chirp there day and night  
While my new rest went on, went on.

## XIV

From gracious Nature have I won  
Such liberal bounty ? may I run  
So, lizard-like, within her side,  
And there be safe, who now am tried  
By days that painfully go on ?

## XV

—A Voice reproves me thereupon,  
Moresweet than Nature's when the drone  
Of bees is sweetest, and more deep  
Than when the rivers overlap  
The shuddering pines, and thunder on.

## XVI

God's Voice, not Nature's ! Night and  
noon  
He sits upon the great white throne  
And listens for the creatures' praise.  
What babble we of days and days ?  
The Dayspring He, whose days go on.

## XVII

He reigns above, He reigns alone ;  
Systems burn out and leave His throne :  
Fair mists of seraphs melt and fall  
Around Him, changeless amid all,—  
Ancient of Days, whose days go on.

## XVIII

He reigns below, He reigns alone,  
And, having life in love forgone  
Beneath the crown of sovran thorns,  
He reigns the Jealous God. Who  
mourns  
Or rules with Him, while days go on ?

## XIX

By anguish which made pale the sun,  
I hear Him charge His saints that  
none  
Among His creatures anywhere  
Blaspheme against Him with despair,  
However darkly days go on.

## XX

Take from my head the thorn-wreath  
brown !  
No mortal grief deserves that crown.  
O supreme Love, chief Misery,  
The sharp regalia are for THEE  
Whose days eternally go on !

## XXI

For us,—whatever's undergone,  
Thou knowest, wilt what is done.  
Grief may be joy misunderstood ;  
Only the Good discerns the good.  
I trust Thee while my days go on.

## XXII

Whatever's lost, it first was won :  
We will not struggle nor impugn.  
Perhaps the cup was broken here,  
That Heaven's new wine might show  
more clear.  
I praise Thee while my days go on.

## XXIII

I praise Thee while my days go on ;  
I love Thee while my days go on :  
Through dark and dearth, through fire  
and frost,  
With emptied arms and treasure lost,  
I thank Thee while my days go on.

## XXIV

And having in Thy life-depth thrown  
Being and suffering (which are one),  
As a child drops his pebble small  
Down some deep well, and hears it fall  
Smiling—so I. THY DAYS GO ON.

## A MUSICAL INSTRUMENT

## I

WHAT was he doing, the great god Pan,  
Down in the reeds by the river?  
Spreading ruin and scattering ban,  
Splashing and paddling with hoofs of  
a goat,  
And breaking the golden lilies afloat  
With the dragon-fly on the river.

## II

He tore out a reed, the great god Pan,  
From the deep cool bed of the river:  
The limpid water turbidly ran,  
And the broken lilies a-dying lay,  
And the dragon-fly had fled away,  
Ere he brought it out of the river.

## III

High on the shore sate the great god Pan,  
While turbidly flowed the river;  
And hacked and hewed as a great god can,  
With his hard bleak steel at the patient  
reed,  
Till there was not a sign of a leaf indeed  
To prove it fresh from the river.

## IV

He cut it short, did the great god Pan  
(How tall it stood in the river!),  
Then drew the pith, like the heart of  
a man,  
Steadily from the outside ring,  
And notched the poor dry empty thing  
In holes, as he sate by the river.

## V

'This is the way,' laughed the great  
god Pan  
(Laughed while he sate by the river),  
'The only way, since gods began  
To make sweet music, they could suc-  
ceed.'  
Then, dropping his mouth to a hole in  
the reed,  
He blew in power by the river.

## VI

Sweet, sweet, sweet, O Pan!  
Piercing sweet by the river!  
Blinding sweet, O great god Pan!  
The sun on the hill forgot to die,  
And the lilies revived, and the dragon-fly  
Came back to dream on the river.

## VII

Yet half a beast is the great god Pan,  
To laugh as he sits by the river,  
Making a poet out of a man:  
The true gods sigh for the cost and  
pain,—  
For the reed which grows nevermore  
again  
As a reed with the reeds in the river.

FIRST NEWS FROM VILLA-  
FRANCA

## I

PEACE, peace, peace, do you say?  
What!—with the enemy's guns in our  
ears!  
With the country's wrong not rendered  
back?  
What!—while Austria stands at bay  
In Mantua, and our Venice bears  
The cursed flag of the yellow and black!

## II

Peace, peace, peace, do you say?  
And this the Mincio? Where's the fleet,  
And where's the sea? Are we all blind  
Or mad with the blood shed yesterday,  
Ignoring Italy under our feet,  
And seeing things before, behind?

## III

Peace, peace, peace, do you say?  
What!—uncontested, undenied?  
Because we triumph, we succumb?  
A pair of Emperors stand in the way  
(One of whom is a man, beside),  
To sign and seal our cannons dumb?

## IV

No, not Napoleon!—he who mused  
At Paris, and at Milan spake,  
And at Solferino led the fight:  
Not he we trusted, honoured, used  
Our hopes and hearts for . . . till they  
break—  
Even so, you tell us . . . in his sight.

## V

Peace, peace, is still your word?  
*We* say you lie then!—that is plain.  
There is no peace, and shall be none.

Our very Dead would cry 'Absurd !'  
And clamour that they died in vain,  
And whine to come back to the sun.

## VI

Hush ! more reverence for the Dead !  
*They've* done the most for Italy  
Evermore since the earth was fair.  
Now would that *we* had died instead,  
Still dreaming peace meant liberty,  
And did not, could not mean despair.

## VII

Peace, you say ?—yes, peace, in truth !  
But such a peace as the ear can achieve  
'Twixt the rifle's click and the rush of  
the ball,  
'Twixt the tiger's spring and the crunch  
of the tooth,  
'Twixt the dying atheist's negative  
And God's Face—waiting, after all !

# KING VICTOR EMANUEL ENTER- ING FLORENCE, APRIL, 1860

## I

KING of us all, we cried to thee, cried to  
thee,  
Trampled to earth by the beasts impure,  
Dragged by the chariots which shame  
as they roll :  
The dust of our torment far and wide to  
thee  
Went up, dark'ning thy royal soul.  
Be witness, Cavour,  
That the King was sad for the people in  
thrall,  
This King of us all !

## II

King, we cried to thee ! Strong in re-  
plying,  
Thy word and thy sword sprang rapid  
and sure,  
Cleaving our way to a nation's place.  
Oh, first soldier of Italy !—crying  
Now grateful, exultant, we look in  
thy face.  
Be witness, Cavour,  
That, freedom's first soldier, the freed  
should call  
First King of them all !

## III

This is our beautiful Italy's birthday ;  
High-thoughted souls, whether many  
or fewer,  
Bring her the gift, and wish her the  
good,  
While Heaven presents on this sunny  
earth-day  
The noble king to the land renewed :  
Be witness, Cavour !  
Roar, cannon-mouths ! Proclaim, install  
The King of us all !

## IV

Grave he rides through the Florence  
gateway,  
Clenching his face into calm, to im-  
mure  
His struggling heart till it half dis-  
appears ;  
If he relaxed for a moment, straightway  
He would break out into passionate  
tears—  
(Be witness, Cavour !)  
While rings the cry without interval,  
'Live, King of us all !'

## V

Cry, free peoples ! Honour the nation  
By crowning the true man—and none  
is truer :  
Pisa is here, and Livorno is here,  
And thousands of faces, in wild exulta-  
tion,  
Burn over the windows to feel him  
near—  
(Be witness, Cavour !)  
Burn over from terrace, roof, window,  
and wall,  
On this King of us all.

## VI

Grave ! A good man's ever the graver  
For bearing a nation's trust secure ;  
And *he*, he thinks of the Heart, beside,  
Which broke for Italy, failing to save her,  
And pining away by Oporto's tide :  
Be witness, Cavour,  
That he thinks of his vow on that royal  
pall,  
This King of us all.

## VII

Flowers, flowers, from the flowery city!  
 Such innocent thanks for a deed so  
     pure,  
 As, melting away for joy into flowers,  
 The nation invites him to enter his Pitti  
 And evermore reign in this Florence  
     of ours.  
     Be witness, Cavour!  
 He'll stand where the reptiles were used  
     to crawl,  
     This King of us all.

## VIII

Grave, as the manner of noble men is—  
 Deeds unfinished will weigh on the  
     doer:  
 And, baring his head to those crape-  
     veiled flags,  
 He bows to the grief of the South and  
     Venice.  
 Oh, riddle the last of the yellow to rags,  
     And swear by Cavour  
 That the King shall reign where the  
     tyrants fall,  
     True King of us all!

### THE SWORD OF CASTRUCCIO CASTRACANI

*Questa è per me.*—KING VICTOR EMANUEL.

## I

WHEN Victor Emanuel the King,  
 Went down to his Lucca that day,  
 The people, each vaunting the thing  
     As he gave it, gave all things away,—  
 In a burst of fierce gratitude, say,  
 As they tore out their hearts for the king.

## II

—Gave the green forest-walk on the  
     wall,  
 With the Apennine blue through the  
     trees;  
 Gave the palaces, churches, and all  
 The great pictures which burn out of  
     these:  
 But the eyes of the King seemed to  
     freeze  
 As he glanced upon ceiling and wall.

## III

'Good,' said the King as he passed.  
 Was he cold to the arts!—or else coy  
 To possession? or crossed, at the last  
     (Whispered some), by the vote in  
     Savoy?  
 Shout! Love him enough for his joy!  
 'Good,' said the King as he passed.

## IV

He, travelling the whole day through  
     flowers  
 And protesting amenities, found  
 At Pistoia, betwixt the two showers  
 Of red roses, the 'Orphans' (renowned  
 As the heirs of Puccini), who wound  
 With a sword through the crowd and  
     the flowers.

## V

'Tis the sword of Castruccio, O King,—  
 In that strife of intestinal hate,  
 Very famous! Accept what we bring,  
 We who cannot be sons, by our fate,  
 Rendered citizens by thee of late,  
 And endowed with a country and king.

## VI

'Read! Puccini has willed that this sword  
 (Which once made in an ignorant feud  
 Many orphans) remain in our ward  
 Till some patriot its pure civic blood  
 Wipe away in the foe's and make good,  
 In delivering the land by the sword.'

## VII

Then the King exclaimed, 'This is for  
     me!'  
 And he dashed out his hand on the hilt,  
 While his blue eye shot fire openly,  
 And his heart overboiled till it spilt  
 A hot prayer,—'God! the rest as  
     Thou wilt!  
 But grant me this!—*This is for me.*'

## VIII

O Victor Emanuel, the King,  
 The sword be for *thee*, and the deed,  
 And nought for the alien, next spring,  
 Nought for Hapsburg and Bourbon  
     agreed—  
 But, for us, a great Italy freed,  
 With a hero to head us,—our King!

## SUMMING UP IN ITALY

(INSCRIBED TO INTELLIGENT  
PUBLICS OUT OF IT)

## I

OBSERVE how it will be at last,  
When our Italy stands at full stature,  
A year ago tied down so fast  
That the cord cut the quick of her  
nature!  
You'll honour the deed and its scope,  
Then, in logical sequence upon it,  
Will use up the remnants of rope  
By hanging the men who have done it.

## II

The speech in the Commons, which hits  
you  
Asketch off, how dungeons must feel,—  
The official dispatch, which commits you  
From stamping out groans with your  
heel,—  
Suggestions in journal or book for  
Good efforts,—are praised as is meet:  
But what in this world can men look for,  
Who only achieve and complete?

## III

True, you've praise for the fireman who  
sets his  
Brave face to the axe of the flame,  
Disappears in the smoke, and then fetches  
A babe down, or idiot that's lame,—  
For the boor even, who rescues through  
pity  
A sheep from the brute who would  
kick it:  
But saviours of nations!—'tis pretty,  
And doubtful: they *may* be so wicked:

## IV

Azeglio, Farini, Mamiani,  
Ricasoli,—doubt by the dozen!—  
here's  
Pepoli too, and Cipriani,  
Imperial cousins and cozeners—  
Arese, Laiatice,—courtly  
Of manners, if stringent of mouth:  
Garibaldi! we'll come to him shortly  
(As soon as he *ends* in the South).

## V

Napoleon—as strong as ten armies,  
Corrupt as seven devils—a fact  
You accede to, then seek where the  
harm is  
Drained off from the man to his act,  
And find—a free nation! Suppose  
Some hell-brood in Eden's sweet  
greenery,  
Convoked for creating—a rose!  
Would it suit the infernal machinery?

## VI

Cavour,—to the despot's desire,  
Who his own thought so craftily  
marries—  
What is he but just a thin wire  
For conducting the lightning from  
Paris?  
Yes, write down the two as compeers,  
Confessing (you would not permit a  
lie)  
He bore up his Piedmont ten years  
Till she suddenly smiled and was Italy.

## VII

And the King, with that 'stain on his  
scutcheon',  
Savoy—as the calumny runs  
(If it be not his blood,—with his clutch  
on  
The sword, and his face to the guns).  
O first, where the battle-storm gathers,  
O loyal of heart on the throne,  
Let those keep the 'graves of their  
fathers,'  
Who quail, in a nerve, from their own!

## VIII

For *thee*—through the dim Hades-portal  
The dream of a voice—'Blessed thou  
Who hast made all thy race twice  
immortal!  
No need of the sepulchres now!  
—Left to Bourbons and Hapsburgs,  
who fester  
Above-ground with worm-eaten souls,  
While the ghost of some pale feudal  
jester  
Before them strews treaties in holes.'

1 Blue Book. Diplomatical Correspondence.

## IX

But hush!—am I dreaming a poem  
Of Hades, Heaven, Justice? Not I—  
I began too far off, in my proem,  
With what men believe and deny:  
And on earth, whatsoever the need is  
(To sum up as thoughtful reviewers),  
The moral of every great deed is  
The virtue of slandering the doers.

'DIED . . .'

(THE 'TIMES' OBITUARY)

## I

WHAT shall we add now? He is dead.  
And I who praise and you who blame,  
With wash of words across his name,  
Find suddenly declared instead—  
'On Sunday, third of August, dead.'

## II

Which stops the whole we talked to-day.  
I, quickened to a plausible glance  
At his large general tolerance  
By common people's narrow way,  
Stopped short in praising. Dead, they  
say.

## III

And you, who had just put in a sort  
Of cold deduction—'rather, large.  
Through weakness of the continent  
marge,  
Than greatness of the thing contained'—  
Broke off. Dead!—there, you stood  
restrained.

## IV

As if we had talked in following one  
Up some long gallery. 'Would you  
choose  
An air like that? The gait is loose—  
Or noble.' Sudden in the sun  
An oubliette winks. Where's he? Gone.

## V

Dead. Man's 'I was' by God's 'I  
am'—  
All hero-worship comes to that.  
High heart, high thought, high fame,  
as flat  
As a gravestone. Bring your *Jacet jam*—  
The epitaph's an epigram.

## VI

Dead. There's an answer to arrest  
All carping. Dust's his natural place!  
He'll let the flies buzz round his face  
And, though you slander, not protest!  
—From such an one, exact the Best?

## VII

Opinions gold or brass are null.  
We chuck our flattery or abuse,  
Called Caesar's due, as Charon's dues,  
I' the teeth of some dead sage or fool,  
To mend the grinning of a skull.

## VIII

Be abstinent in praise and blame.  
The man's still mortal, who stands  
first,  
And mortal only, if last and worst.  
Then slowly lift so frail a fame,  
Or softly drop so poor a shame.

## THE FORCED RECRUIT

SOLFERINO, 1859

## I

In the ranks of the Austrian you found  
him,  
He died with his face to you all;  
Yet bury him here where around him  
You honour your bravest that fall.

## II

Venetian, fair-featured and slender,  
He lies shot to death in his youth,  
With a smile on his lips over-tender  
For any mere soldier's dead mouth.

## III

No stranger, and yet not a traitor,  
Though alien the cloth on his breast,  
Underneath it how seldom a greater  
Young heart, has a shot sent to rest!

## IV

By your enemy tortured and goaded  
To march with them, stand in their file,  
His musket (see) never was loaded.  
He facing your guns with that smile!

## V

As orphans yearn on to their mothers,  
He yearned to your patriot bands ;—  
'Let me die for our Italy, brothers,  
If not in your ranks, by your hands !

## VI

'Aim straightly, fire steadily ! spare me  
A ball in the body which may  
Deliver my heart here, and tear me  
This badge of the Austrian away !'

## VII

So thought he, so died he this morning.  
What then ? many others have died.  
Aye, but easy for men to die scorning  
The death-stroke, who fought side by  
side—

## VIII

One tricolor floating above them ;  
Struck down 'mid triumphant acclaims  
Of an Italy rescued to love them  
And blazon the brass with their names.

## IX

But he,—without witness or honour,  
Mixed, shamed in his country's regard,  
With the tyrants who march in upon her,  
Died faithful and passive : 'twas hard.

## X

'Twas sublime. In a cruel restriction  
Cut off from the guerdon of sons,  
With most filial obedience, conviction,  
His soul kissed the lips of her guns.

## XI

That moves you ? Nay, grudge not to  
show it,  
While digging a grave for him here :  
The others who died, says your poet,  
Have glory,—let *him* have a tear.

## GARIBALDI

## I

He bent his head upon his breast  
Wherein his lion-heart lay sick :—  
'Perhaps we are not ill-repaid ;  
Perhaps this is not a true test ;  
Perhaps that was not a foul trick ;  
Perhaps none wronged, and none  
betrayed.

## II

'Perhaps the people's vote which here  
United, there may disunite,  
And both be lawful as they think ;  
Perhaps a patriot statesman, dear  
For chartering nations, can with right  
Disfranchise those who hold the ink.

## III

'Perhaps men's wisdom is not craft ;  
Men's greatness, not a selfish greed ;  
Men's justice, not the safer side ;  
Perhaps even women, when they  
laughed,  
Wept, thanked us that the land was  
freed,  
Not wholly (though they kissed us)  
lied.

## IV

'Perhaps no more than this we meant,  
When up at Austria's guns we flew,  
And quenched them with a cry apiece,  
*Italia !*—Yet a dream was sent . .  
The little house my father knew,  
The olives and the palms of Nice.'

## V

He paused, and drew his sword out slow,  
Then pored upon the blade intent,  
As if to read some written thing ;  
While many murmured,—'He will go  
In that despairing sentiment  
And break his sword before the King.'

## VI

He poring still upon the blade,  
His large lid quivered, something fell.  
'Perhaps,' he said, 'I was not born  
With such fine brains to treat and trade,—  
And if a woman knew it well,  
Her falsehood only meant her scorn.

## VII

'Yet through Varese's cannon-smoke  
My eye saw clear : men feared this man  
At Como, where this sword could seal  
Death's protocol with every stroke :  
And now . . the drop there scarcely can  
Impair the keenness of the steel.

## VIII

So man and sword may have their use ;  
 And if the soil beneath my foot  
 In valour's act is forfeited,  
 I'll strike the harder, take my dues  
 Out nobler, and all loss confute  
 From ampler heavens above my head.

## IX

'My King, King Victor, I am thine !  
 So much Nice-dust as what I am  
 (To make our Italy) must cleave.  
 Forgive that.' Forward with a sign  
 He went.      You've seen the telegram ?  
*Palermo's taken, we believe.*

## ONLY A CURL

## I

FRIENDS of faces unknown and a land  
 Unvisited over the sea,  
 Who tell me how lonely you stand  
 With a single gold curl in the hand  
 Held up to be looked at by me,—

## II

While you ask me to ponder and say  
 What a father and mother can do,  
 With the bright fellow-locks put away  
 Out of reach, beyond kiss, in the clay  
 Where the violets press nearer than  
 you.

## III

Shall I speak like a poet, or run  
 Into weak woman's tears for relief ?  
 Oh, children !—I never lost one,—  
 Yet my arm's round my own little son,  
 And Love knows the secret of Grief.

## IV

And I feel what it must be and is,  
 When God draws a new angel so  
 Through the house of a man up to His,  
 With a murmur of music, you miss,  
 And a rapture of light, you forgo.

## V

How you think, staring on at the door,  
 Where the face of your angel flashed  
 in,  
 That its brightness, familiar before,  
 Burns off from you ever the more  
 For the dark of your sorrow and sin.

## VI

'God lent him and takes him,' you sigh ;  
 —Nay, there let me break with your  
 pain :  
 God's generous in giving, say I,—  
 And the thing which He gives, I deny  
 That He ever can take back again.

## VII

He gives what He gives. I appeal  
 To all who bear babes—in the hour  
 When the veil of the body we feel  
 Rent round us,—while torments reveal  
 The motherhood's advent in power,

## VIII

And the babe cries !—has each of us  
 known  
 By apocalypse (God being there  
 Full in nature) the child is our own,  
 Life of life, love of love, moan of moan,  
 Through all changes, all times, every-  
 where.

## IX

He's ours and for ever. Believe,  
 O father !—O mother, look back  
 To the first love's assurance. To give  
 Means with God not to tempt or deceive  
 With a cup thrust in Benjamin's sack.

## X

He gives what He gives. Be content !  
 He resumes nothing given,—be sure !  
 God lend ? Where the usurers lent  
 In His temple, indignant He went  
 And scourged away all those impure.

## XI

He lends not ; but gives to the end,  
 As He loves to the end. If it seem  
 That He draws back a gift, com-  
 prehend  
 'Tis to add to it rather,—amend,  
 And finish it up to your dream,—

## XII

Or keep,—as a mother will toys  
Too costly, though given by herself,  
Till the room shall be stiller from noise,  
And the children more fit for such joys,  
Kept over their heads on the shelf.

## XIII

So look up, friends! you, who indeed  
Have possessed in your house a sweet  
piece  
Of the Heaven which men strive for,  
must need  
Be more earnest than others are,—speed  
Where they loiter, persist where they  
cease.

## XIV

You know how one angel smiles there.  
Then weep not. 'Tis easy for you  
To be drawn by a single gold hair  
Of that curl, from earth's storm and  
despair,  
To the safe place above us. Adieu.

# A VIEW ACROSS THE ROMAN CAMPAGNA

1861

## I

Over the dumb Campagna-sea,  
Out in the offing through mist and  
rain,  
Saint Peter's Church heaves silently  
Like a mighty ship in pain,  
Facing the tempest with struggle and  
strain.

## II

Motionless waifs of ruined towers,  
Soundless breakers of desolate land:  
The sullen surf of the mist devours  
That mountain-range upon either hand,  
Eaten away from its outline grand.

## III

And over the dumb Campagna-sea  
Where the ship of the Church heaves  
on to wreck,  
Alone and silent as God must be,  
The Christ walks. Aye, but Peter's  
neck  
Is stiff to turn on the foundering deck.

## IV

Peter, Peter! if such be thy name,  
Now leave the ship for another to steer,  
And proving thy faith evermore the same,  
Come forth, tread out through the  
dark and drear,  
Since He who walks on the sea is here.

## V

Peter, Peter! He does not speak;  
He is not as rash as in old Galilee:  
Safer a ship, though it toss and leak,  
Than a reeling foot on a rolling sea!  
And he's got to be round in the girth,  
thinks he.

## VI

Peter, Peter! He does not stir;  
His nets are heavy with silver fish;  
He reckons his gains, and is keen to infer  
—'The broil on the shore, if the Lord  
should wish;  
But the sturgeon goes to the Caesar's  
dish.'

## VII

Peter, Peter! thou fisher of men,  
Fisher of fish wouldst thou live instead!  
Haggling for pence with the other Ten,  
Cheating the market at so much a head,  
Gripping the Bag of the traitor Dead!

## VIII

At the triple crow of the Gallic cock  
Thou weep'st not, thou, though thine  
eyes be dazed:  
What bird comes next in the tempest-  
shock?  
—Vultures! see,—as when Romulus  
gazed,—  
To inaugurate Rome for a world  
amazed!

## THE KING'S GIFT

## I

TERESA, ah, Teresita!  
Now what has the messenger brought her,  
Our Garibaldi's young daughter,  
To make her stop short in her singing?  
Will she not once more repeat a  
Verse from that hymn of our hero's,  
Setting the souls of us ringing?  
Break off the song where the tear rose?  
Ah, Teresita!

## II

A young thing, mark, is Teresa :  
 Her eyes have caught fire, to be sure, in  
 That necklace of jewels from Turin,  
 Till blind their regard to us men is.  
 But still she remembers to raise a  
 Sly look to her father, and note—  
 'Could she sing on as well about  
 Venice,  
 Yet wear such a flame at her throat?  
 Decide for Teresa.'

## III

Teresa! ah, Teresita!  
 His right hand has paused on her head—  
 'Accept it, my daughter,' he said;  
 'Aye, wear it, true child of thy mother!  
 Then sing, till all start to their feet, a  
 New verse ever bolder and freer!  
 King Victor's no kinglike another,  
 But verily noble as *we* are,  
 Child, Teresita!'

## PARTING LOVERS

SIENA, 1860

## I

I LOVE thee, love thee, Giulio;  
 Some call me cold, and some demure;  
 And if thou hast ever guessed that so  
 I loved thee.. well, the proof was poor,  
 And no one could be sure.

## II

Before thy song (with shifted rimes  
 To suit my name) did I undo  
 The persian? If it stirred sometimes,  
 Thou hast not seen a hand push through  
 A foolish flower or two.

## III

My mother listening to my sleep,  
 Heard nothing but a sigh at night,—  
 The short sigh rippling on the deep,  
 When hearts run out of breath and  
 sight  
 Of men, to God's clear light.

## IV

When others named thee,—thought thy  
 brows  
 Were straight, thy smile was tender,—  
 'Here  
 He comes between the vineyard-rows!'  
 I said not 'Aye,' nor waited, Dear,  
 To feel thee step too near.

## V

I left such things to bolder girls,—  
 Olivia or Clotilda. Nay,  
 When that Clotilda, through her curls,  
 Held both thine eyes in hers one day,  
 I marvelled, let me say.

## VI

I could not try the woman's trick :  
 Between us straightway fell the blush  
 Which kept me separate, blind and sick.  
 A wind came with thee in a flush,  
 As blown through Sinai's bush.

## VII

But now that Italy invokes  
 Her young men to go forth and chase  
 The foe or perish,—nothing chokes  
 My voice, or drives me from the place,  
 I look thee in the face.

## VIII

I love thee! It is understood,  
 Confest: I do not shrink or start.  
 No blushes! all my body's blood  
 Has gone to greaten this poor heart,  
 That, loving, we may part.

## IX

Our Italy invokes the youth  
 To die if need be. Still there's room,  
 Though earth is strained with dead in  
 truth :  
 Since twice the lilies were in bloom  
 They have not grudged a tomb.

## X

And many a plighted maid and wife  
 And mother, who can say since then  
 'My country,'—cannot say through life  
 'My son,' 'my spouse,' 'my flower  
 of men,'  
 And not weep dumb again.

## XI

Heroic males the country bears,—  
But daughters give up more than sons :  
Flags wave, drums beat, and unawares  
You flash your souls out with the guns,  
And take your Heaven at once.

## XII

But we!—we empty heart and home  
Of life's life, love! We bear to think  
You're gone,—to feel you may not  
come,—

To hear the door-latch stir and clink,  
Yet no more you! . . . nor sink.

## XIII

Dear God! when Italy is one,  
Complete, content from bound to bound,  
Suppose, for my share, earth's undone  
By one grave in't!—as one small wound  
Will kill a man, 'tis found.

## XIV

What then? If love's delight must end,  
At least we'll clear its truth from flaws.  
I love thee, love thee, sweetest friend!  
Now take my sweetest without pause,  
And help the nation's cause.

## XV

And thus, of noble Italy  
We'll both be worthy! Let her show  
The future how we made her free,  
Not sparing life . . . nor Giulio,  
Nor this . . . this heartbreak! Go.

MOTHER AND POET<sup>1</sup>

TURIN, AFTER NEWS FROM GAETA,  
1861

## I

DEAD! One of them shot by the sea in  
the east,  
And one of them shot in the west by  
the sea.  
Dead! both my boys! When you sit  
at the feast  
And are wanting a great song for Italy  
free,  
Let none look at me!

<sup>1</sup> This was Laura Savio, of Turin, a poetess  
and patriot, whose sons were killed at Ancona  
and Gaeta.

## II

Yet I was a poetess only last year,  
And good at my art, for a woman,  
men said;  
But *this* woman, *this*, who is agonized  
here,  
—The east sea and west sea rime  
on in her head  
For ever instead.

## III

What art can a woman be good at? Oh,  
vain!  
What art *is* she good at, but hurting  
her breast  
With the milk-teeth of babes, and  
a smile at the pain?  
Ah, boys, how you hurt! you were  
strong as you pressed,  
And I proud, by that test.

## IV

What art's for a woman! To hold on  
her knees  
Both darlings! to feel all their arms  
round her throat,  
Cling, strangle a little! to sew by  
degrees  
And 'broider the long-clothes and neat  
little coat;  
To dream and to dote.

## V

To teach them . . . It stings there! *I*  
made them indeed  
Speak plain the word *country*. *I*  
taught them, no doubt,  
That a country's a thing men should die  
for at need.  
*I* prated of liberty, rights, and about  
The tyrant cast out.

## VI

And when their eyes flashed . . . O my  
beautiful eyes! . . .  
*I* exulted; nay, let them go forth at  
the wheels  
Of the guns, and denied not. But ther  
the surprise  
When one sits quite alone! Then one  
weeps, then one kneels!  
God, how the house feels!

## VII

At first, happy news came, in gay letters  
moiled  
With my kisses,—of camp-life and  
glory, and how  
They both loved me; and, soon coming  
home to be spoiled,  
In return would fan off every fly from  
my brow  
With their green laurel-bough.

## VIII

Then was triumph at Turin: 'Ancona  
was free!'  
And some one came out of the cheers  
in the street.  
With a face pale as stone, to say some-  
thing to me.  
My Guido was dead! I fell down at  
his feet,  
While they cheered in the street.

## IX

I bore it; friends soothed me; my grief  
looked sublime  
As the ransom of Italy. One boy  
remained  
To be leant on and walked with, re-  
calling the time  
When the first grew immortal, while  
both of us strained  
To the height he had gained.

## X

And letters still came, shorter, sadder,  
more strong,  
Writ now but in one hand, 'I was  
not to faint,—  
One loved me for two—would be with  
me ere long:  
And *Viva l'Italia!*—he died for, our  
saint,  
Who forbids our complaint.'

## XI

My Nanni would add, 'he was safe, and  
aware  
Of a presence that turned off the  
balls,—was imprest  
It was Guido himself, who knew what  
I could bear,

And how 'twas impossible, quite dis-  
possessed,  
To live on for the rest.'

## XII

On which, without pause, up the  
telegraph-line  
Swept smoothly the next news from  
Gaeta:—*Shot.*  
*Tell his mother.* Ah, ah, 'his,' 'their'  
mother,—not 'mine,'  
No voice says 'My mother' again to  
me. What!  
You think Guido forgot?

## XIII

Are souls straight so happy that, dizzy  
with Heaven,  
They drop earth's affections, conceive  
not of woe?  
I think not. Themselves were too lately  
forgiven  
Through THAT Love and Sorrow  
which reconciled so  
The Above and Below.

## XIV

O Christ of the five wounds, who  
look'dst through the dark  
To the face of Thy mother! consider,  
I pray,  
How we common mothers stand  
desolate, mark,  
Whose sons, not being Christs, die  
with eyes turned away,  
And no last word to say!

## XV

Both boys dead? but that's out of nature.  
We all  
Have been patriots, yet each house  
must always keep one.  
'Twere imbecile, hewing out roads to  
a wall;  
And, when Italy's made, for what end  
is it done  
If we have not a son?

## XVI

Ah, ah, ah ! when Gaeta's taken what then?

When the fair wicked queen sits no more at her sport  
Of the fire-balls of death crashing souls out of men?

When the guns of Cavalli with final retort

Have cut the game short?

## XVII

When Venice and Rome keep their new jubilee,

When your flag takes all heaven for its white, green, and red,

When *you* have your country from mountain to sea,

When King Victor has Italy's crown on his head,

(And *I* have my Dead)—

## XVIII

What then? Do not mock me. Ah, ring your bells low,

And burn your lights faintly! *My* country is *there*,

Above the star pricked by the last peak of snow:

My Italy's *THERE*, with my brave civic Pair,

To disfranchise despair!

## XIX

Forgive me. Some women bear children in strength,

And bite back the cry of their pain in self-scorn;

But the birth-pangs of nations will wring us at length

Into wail such as this—and we sit on forlorn

When the man-child is born.

## XX

Dead! One of them shot by the sea in the east,

And one of them shot in the west by the sea.

Both! both my boys! If in keeping the feast

You want a great song for your Italy free,

Let none look at *me*!

## NATURE'S REMORSES

ROME, 1861

## I

HER soul was bred by a throne, and fed  
From the sucking-bottle used in her race

On starch and water (for mother's milk

Which gives a larger growth instead),  
And, out of the natural liberal grace,  
Was swaddled away in violet silk.

## II

And young and kind, and royally blind,  
Forth she stepped from her palace-door

On three-piled carpet of compliments,

Curtains of incense drawn by the wind  
In between her for evermore

And daylight issues of events.

## III

On she drew, as a queen might do,

To meet a Dream of Italy,—

Of magical town and musical wave,

Where even a god, his amulet blue

Of shining sea, in an ecstasy

Dropt and forgot in a nereid's cave.

## IV

Down she goes, as the soft wind blows,  
To live more smoothly than mortals can,

To love and to reign as queen and wife,

To wear a crown that smells of a rose,  
And still, with a sceptre as light as a fan,

Beat sweet time to the song of life.

## V

What is this? As quick as a kiss  
Falls the smile from her girlish mouth!

The lion-people has left its lair,

Roaring along her garden of bliss,  
And the fiery underworld of the South

Scorched a way to the upper air.

## VI

And a fire-stone ran in the form of a man,  
 Burningly, boundingly, fatal and fell,  
 Bowling the kingdom down!  
 Where was the king?  
 She had heard somewhat, since life  
 began,  
 Of terrors on earth and horrors in hell,  
 But never, never of such a thing!

## VII

You think she dropped when her dream  
 was stopped,  
 When the blotch of Bourbon blood  
 inlay,  
 Lividly rank, her new lord's cheek?  
 Not so. Her high heart overtopped  
 The royal part she had come to play.  
 Only the men in that hour were  
 weak.

## VIII

And twice a wife by her ravaged life,  
 And twice a queen by her kingdom lost,  
 She braved the shock and the  
 counter-shock  
 Of hero and traitor, bullet and knife,  
 While Italy pushed, like a vengeful  
 ghost,  
 That son of the Cursed from Gaeta's  
 rock.

## IX

What will ye give her, who could not  
 deliver,  
 German Princesses? A laurel-wreath  
 All over-scored with your signatures,  
 Graces, Serenities, Highnesses ever?  
 Mock her not, fresh from the truth of  
 Death,  
 Conscious of dignities higher than  
 yours.

## X

What will ye put in your casket shut,  
 Ladies of Paris, in sympathy's name?  
 Guizot's daughter, what have you  
 brought her?  
 Withered immortelles, long ago cut  
 For guilty dynasties perished in shame,  
 Putrid to memory, Guizot's daugh-  
 ter?

## XI

Ah, poor queen! so young and serene!  
 What shall we do for her, now hope's  
 done,  
 Standing at Rome in these ruins  
 cold,  
 She too a ruin and no more a queen?  
 Leave her that diadem made by the  
 sun  
 Turning her hair to an innocent gold.

## XII

Aye! bring close to her, as 'twere a rose,  
 to her,  
 Von free child from an Apennine city  
 Singing for Italy,—dumb in the  
 place!  
 Something like solace, let us suppose,  
 to her  
 Given, in that homage of wonder and  
 pity,  
 By his pure eyes to her beautiful face.

## XIII

Nature, excluded, savagely brooded,  
 Ruined all queendom and dogmas of  
 state,—  
 Then in reaction remorseful and  
 mild,  
 Rescues the womanhood, nearly eluded,  
 Shows her what's sweetest in woman-  
 ly fate—  
 Sunshine from Heaven, and the  
 eyes of a child.

## THE NORTH AND THE SOUTH

[THE LAST POEM]

ROME, MAY, 1861

## I

'Now give us lands where the olives  
 grow,'  
 Cried the North to the South,  
 'Where the sun with a golden mouth  
 can blow  
 Blue bubbles of grapes down a vineyard-  
 row!'  
 Cried the North to the South.

'Now give us men from the sunless plain,'  
Cried the South to the North,  
'By need of work in the snow and the  
rain,  
Madestrong, and brave by familiar pain!'  
Cried the South to the North.

## II

'Give lucider hills and intenser seas,'  
Said the North to the South,  
'Since ever by symbols and bright degrees  
Art, childlike, climbs to the dear Lord's  
knees,'  
Said the North to the South.

'Give strenuous souls for belief and  
prayer,'  
Said the South to the North,  
'That stand in the dark on the lowest  
stair,  
While affirming of God, "He is certainly  
there,"'  
Said the South to the North.

## III

'Yet oh, for the skies that are softer  
and higher!'  
Sighed the North to the South;  
'For the flowers that blaze, and the trees  
that aspire,  
And the insects made of a song or a fire!'  
Sighed the North to the South.

'And oh, for a seer to discern the  
same!'  
Sighed the South to the North;  
'For a poet's tongue of baptismal flame,  
To call the tree or the flower by its  
name!'  
Sighed the South to the North.

## IV

The North sent therefore a man of men  
As a grace to the South;  
And thus to Rome came Andersen.  
—'Alas, but must you take him again?'  
Said the South to the North.

## TRANSLATIONS

## PARAPHRASE ON THEOCRITUS

## THE CYCLOPS

## IDYLL XI

AND so an easier life our Cyclops drew,  
The ancient Polyphemus, who in youth  
Loved Galatea while the manhood grew  
Adown his cheeks and darkened round  
his mouth.  
No jot he cared for apples, olives, roses;  
Love made him mad: the whole world  
was neglected,  
The very sheep went backward to their  
closes  
From out the fair green pastures, self-  
directed.  
And singing Galatea, thus, he wore  
The sunrise down along the weedy  
shore,  
And pined alone, and felt the cruel wound  
Beneath his heart, which Cypris' arrow  
bore,

With a deep pang; but, so, the cure was  
found;  
And sitting on a lofty rock he cast  
His eyes upon the sea, and sang at  
last:—

'O whitest Galatea, can it be  
That thou shouldst spurn me off who  
love thee so?  
More white than curds, my girl, thou  
art to see,  
More meek than lambs, more full of leap-  
ing glee  
Than kids, and brighter than the early  
glow  
On grapes that swell to ripen,—sour like  
thee!  
Thou comest to me with the fragrant sleep,  
And with the fragrant sleep thou goest  
from me;  
Thou fliest . . . fliest, as a frightened sheep  
Flies the grey wolf!—yet Love did  
overcome me,

So long;—I loved thee, maiden, first of all  
When down the hills (my mother fast  
beside thee)

I saw thee stray to pluck the summer-fall  
Of hyacinth bells, and went myself to  
guide thee:

And since my eyes have seen thee, they  
can leave thee

No more, from that day's light! But  
thou . . . by Zeus,

Thou wilt not care for *that*, to let it grieve  
thee!

I know thee, fair one, why thou  
springest loose

From my arm round thee. Why? I tell  
thee, Dear!

One shaggy eyebrow draws its smudg-  
ing road

Straight through my ample front, from  
ear to ear,—

One eye rolls underneath; and yawn-  
ing, broad

Flat nostrils feel the bulging lips too near.  
Yet . . . ho, ho!—*I*,—whatever I appear,—

Do feed a thousand oxen! When I  
have done,

I milk the cows, and drink the milk that's  
best!

I lack no cheese, while summer keeps  
the sun;

And after, in the cold, it's ready prest!  
And then, I know to sing, as there is  
none

Of all the Cyclops can, . . . a song of thee,  
Sweet apple of my soul, on love's fair tree,  
And of myself who love thee . . . till the  
West

Forgets the light, and all but I have rest.  
I feed for thee, besides, eleven fair does,  
And all in fawn; and four tame whelps  
of bears.

Come to me, Sweet! thou shalt have all  
of those

In change for love! I will not halve  
the shares.

Leave the blue sea, with pure white arms  
extended

To the dry shore; and, in my cave's  
recess,

Thou shalt be gladder for the noonlight  
ended,—

For here be laurels, spiral cypresses,  
Dark ivy, and a vine whose leaves unfold

Most luscious grapes; and here is water  
cold,

The wooded Aetna pours down through  
the trees

From the white snows,—which gods  
were scarce too bold

To drink in turn with nectar. Who  
with these

Would choose the salt wave of the  
lukewarm seas?

Nay, look on me! If I am hairy and  
rough,

I have an oak's heart in me; there's  
a fire

In these grey ashes which burns hot  
enough;

And when I burn for *thee*, I grudge  
the pyre

No fuel . . . not my soul, nor this one eye,—  
Most precious thing I have, because  
thereby

I see thee, Fairest! Out, alas! I wish  
My mother had borne me finned like a fish,  
That I might plunge down in the ocean  
near thee,

And kiss thy glittering hand between  
the weeds,

If still thy face were turned; and I would  
bear thee

Each lily white, and poppy fair that  
bleeds

Its red heart down its leaves!—one gift,  
for hours

Of summer, . . . one, for winter; since,  
to cheer thee,

I could not bring at once all kinds of  
flowers.

Even now, girl, now, I fain would learn  
to swim,

If stranger in a ship sailed nigh, I wis,—  
That I may know how sweet a thing it is  
To live down with you, in the Deep and  
Dim!

Come up, O Galatea, from the ocean,  
And having come, forget again to go!

As I, who sing out here my heart's  
emotion,

Could sit for ever. Come up from  
below!

Come, keep my flocks beside me, milk  
my kine,—

Come, press my cheese, distrain my  
whey and curd!

Ah, mother! she alone . . . that mother of mine . . .

Did wrong me sore! I blame her!—  
Not a word

Of kindly intercession did she address  
Thine ear with for my sake; and ne'er-  
theless

She saw me wasting, wasting, day by  
day!

Both head and feet were aching, I will  
say,

All sick for grief, as I myself was sick!

O Cyclops, Cyclops, whither hast thou  
sent

Thy soul on fluttering wings? If thou  
wert bent

On turning bowls, or pulling green and  
thick

The sprouts to give thy lambkins,—  
thou wouldst make thee

A wiser Cyclops than for what we  
take thee.

Milk dry the present! Why pursue too  
quick

That future which is fugitive aright?

Thy Galatea thou shalt haply find,—  
Or else a maiden fairer and more kind;

For many girls do call me through the  
night,

And, as they call, do laugh out silverly.

I, too, am something in the world,  
I see!

While thus the Cyclops love and lambs  
did fold,

Ease came with song, he could not buy  
with gold.

## PARAPHRASES ON APULEIUS

### PSYCHE GAZING ON CUPID

*Metamorph., Lib. IV*

THEN Psyche, weak in body and soul,  
put on

The cruelty of Fate, in place of strength:  
She raised the lamp to see what should  
be done,

And seized the steel, and was a man  
at length

In courage, though a woman! Yes, but  
when

The light fell on the bed whereby she  
stood

To view the 'beast' that lay there,—  
certes, then,

She saw the gentlest, sweetest beast  
in wood—

Even Cupid's self, the beauteous god!  
more beauteous

For that sweet sleep across his eyelids  
dim!

The light, the lady carried as she viewed,  
Did blush for pleasure as it lighted him,

The dagger trembled from its aim un-  
duteous;

And she . . . oh, she—amazed and soul-  
distraught,

And fainting in her whiteness like a veil,  
Slid down upon her knees, and, shud-  
dering, thought

To hide—though in her heart—the dagger  
pale!

She would have done it, but her hands  
did fail

To hold the guilty steel, they shivered  
so,—

And feeble, exhausted, unawares she took  
To gazing on the god,—till, look by look,

Her eyes with larger life did fill and  
glow.

She saw his golden head alight with curls:  
She might have guessed their bright-  
ness in the dark

By that ambrosial smell of heavenly  
mark!

She saw the milky brow, more pure than  
pearls,

The purple of the cheeks, divinely  
sundered

By the globed ringlets, as they glided free,  
Some back, some forwards,—all so  
radiantly,

That, as she watched them there, she  
never wondered

To see the lamplight, where it touched  
them, tremble

On the god's shoulders, too, she marked  
his wings

Shine faintly at the edges and resemble  
A flower that's near to blow. The poet  
sings

And lover sighs, that Love is fugitive;

And certes, though these pinions lay  
reposing,

The feathers on them seemed to stir  
and live

As if by instinct, closing and unclosing.

Meantime the god's fair body slumbered  
deep,

All worthy of Venus, in his shining  
sleep;

While at the bed's foot lay the quiver,  
bow,

And darts,—his arms of godhead. Psyche  
gazed

With eyes that drank the wonders in,  
—said,—‘Lo,

Be these my husband's arms?’—and  
straightway raised

An arrow from the quiver-case, and  
tried

Its point against her finger,—trembling  
till

She pushed it in too deeply (foolish  
bride !)

And made her blood some dewdrops  
small distil,

And learnt to love Love, of her own  
goodwill.

#### PSYCHE WAFTEO BY ZEPHYRUS

*Metamorph.*, Lib. IV

WHILE Psyche wept upon the rock for-  
saken,

Alone, despairing, dreading,—gradu-  
ally

By Zephyrus she was enwrapt and taken  
Still trembling,—like the lilies planted

high,—

Through all her fair white limbs. Her  
vesture spread,

Her very bosom eddying with sur-  
prise,—

He drew her slowly from the mountain-  
head,

And bore her down the valleys with  
wet eyes,

And laid her in the lap of a green dell  
As soft with grass and flowers as any

nest,

With trees beside her, and a limpid well :  
Yet Love was not far off from all that

Rest.

#### PSYCHE AND PAN

*Metamorph.*, Lib. V

THE gentle River, in her Cupid's honour,  
Because he used to warm the very  
wave,

Did ripple aside, instead of closing on her,  
And cast up Psyche, with a reflux

brave,

Upon the flowery bank,—all sad and  
sinning.

Then Pan, the rural god, by chance was  
leaning

Along the brow of waters as they  
wound,

Kissing the reed-nymph till she sank  
to ground,

And teaching, without knowledge of the  
meaning,

To run her voice in music after his

Down many a shifting note (the goats  
around,

In wandering pasture and most leap-  
ing bliss,

Drawn on to crop the river's flowery hair);  
And as the hoary god beheld her there,

The poor, worn, fainting Psyche!—  
knowing all

The grief she suffered, he did gently call  
Her name, and softly comfort her des-  
pair:—

‘O wise, fair lady, I am rough and rude,  
And yet experienced through my weary  
age!

And if I read aright, as soothsayer  
should,

Thy faltering steps of heavy pilgrimage,  
Thy paleness, deep as snow we

cannot see

The roses through,—thy sighs of quick  
returning,

Thine eyes that seem, themselves, two  
souls in mourning,—

Thou lovest, girl, too well, and  
bitterly!

But hear me : rush no more to a head-  
long fall :

Seek no more deaths ! leave wail, lay  
sorrow down,

And pray the sovran god ; and use  
withal

Such prayer as best may suit a tender  
youth,  
Well-pleased to bend to flatteries from  
thy mouth  
And feel them stir the myrtle of his  
crown.'

—So spake the shepherd-god; and  
answer none  
Gave Psyche in return: but silently  
She did him homage with a bended  
knee,  
And took the onward path.—

#### PSYCHE PROPITIATING CERES

*Metamorph.*, Lib. VI

THEN mother Ceres from afar beheld  
her,  
While Psyche touched, with reverent  
fingers meek,  
The temple's scythes; and with a cry  
compelled her:—  
'O wretched Psyche, Venus roams to  
seek  
Thy wandering footsteps round the  
weary earth,  
Anxious and maddened, and adjures  
thee forth  
To accept the imputed pang, and let  
her wreak  
Full vengeance with full force of deity!  
Yet *thou*, forsooth, art in my temple  
here,  
Touching my scythes, assuming my  
degree,  
And daring to have thoughts that are  
not fear!'  
—But Psyche clung to her feet, and as  
they moved  
Rained tears along their track, tear,  
dropped on tear,  
And drew the dust on in her trailing  
locks,  
And still, with passionate prayer, the  
charge disproved:—  
'Now, by thy right hand's gathering  
from the shocks  
Of golden corn,—and by thy gladsome  
rites  
Of harvest,—and thy consecrated sights

Shut safe and mute in chests,—and by  
the course  
Of thy slave-dragons,—and the driving  
force  
Of ploughs along Sicilian glebes pro-  
found,—  
By thy swift chariot,—by thy steadfast  
ground,—  
By all those nuptial torches that departed  
With thy lost daughter,—and by  
those that shone  
Back with her, when she came again  
glad-hearted,—  
And by all other mysteries which are  
done  
In silence at Eleusis,—I beseech thee,  
O Ceres, take some pity, and abstain  
From giving to my soul extremest pain  
Who am the wretched Psyche! Let me  
teach thee  
A little mercy, and have thy leave to  
spend  
A few days only in thy garnered corn,  
Until that wrathful goddess, at the  
end,  
Shall feel her hate grow mild, the  
longer borne,—  
Or till, alas!—this faintness at my breast  
Pass from me, and my spirit apprehend  
From life-long woe a breath-time hour  
of rest!'  
—But Ceres answered, 'I am moved in-  
deed  
By prayers so moist with tears, and  
would defend  
The poor beseecher from more utter need:  
But where old oaths, anterior ties,  
commend,  
I cannot fail to a sister, lie to a friend,  
As Venus is to *me*. Depart with speed!'

#### PSYCHE AND THE EAGLE

*Metamorph.*, Lib. VI

BUT sovran Jove's rapacious Bird, the  
regal  
High percher on the lightning, the great  
eagle  
Drove down with rushing wings; and,  
—thinking how,  
By Cupid's help, he bore from Ida's brow

A cup-boy for his master,—he inclined  
To yield, in just return, an influence  
kind:

The god being honoured in his lady's  
woe.

And thus the Bird wheeled downward  
from the track,

Gods follow gods in, to the level low  
Of that poor face of Psyche left in wrack.

—'Now fie, thou simple girl!' the  
Bird began;

'For if thou think to steal and carry back  
A drop of holiest stream that ever ran,  
No simpler thought, methinks, were  
found in man.

What! know'st thou not these Stygian  
waters be

Most holy, even to Jove? that as, on  
earth,

Men swear by gods, and by the thunder's  
worth,

Even so the heavenly gods do utter forth  
Their oaths by Styx's flowing majesty?

And yet, one little urnful, I agree  
To grant thy need!' Whereat, all  
hastily,

He takes it, fills it from the willing  
wave,

And bears it in his beak, incarnadined  
By the last Titan-prey he screamed to  
have;

And, striking calmly out, against the  
wind,

Vast wings on each side,—there, where  
Psyche stands,

He drops the urn down in her lifted  
hands.

#### PSYCHE AND CERBERUS

*Metamorph.*, Lib. VI

A MIGHTY dog with three colossal necks,  
And heads in grand proportion; vast  
as fear,

With jaws that bark the thunder out  
that breaks

In most innocuous dread for ghosts  
anear,

Who are safe in death from sorrow: he  
reclines

Across the threshold of queen Proser-  
pine's

Dark-sweeping halls, and, there, for  
Pluto's spouse,

Doth guard the entrance of the empty  
house.

When Psyche threw the cake to him,  
once amain

He howled up wildly from his hunger-  
pain,

And was still, after.—

#### PSYCHE AND PROSERPINE

*Metamorph.*, Lib. VI

THEN Psyche entered in to Proserpine  
In the dark house, and straightway did  
decline

With meek denial the luxurious seat,  
The liberal board for welcome stran-  
gers spread,

But sate down lowly at the dark queen's  
feet,

And told her tale, and brake her  
oaten bread.

And when she had given the pyx in  
humble duty,

And told how Venus did entreat the  
queen

To fill it up with only one day's beauty  
She used in Hades, star-bright and  
serene,

To beautify the Cyprian, who had been  
All spoilt with grief in nursing her  
sick boy,—

Then Proserpine, in malice and in joy,  
Smiled in the shade, and took the  
pyx, and put

A secret in it; and so, filled and  
shut,

Gave it again to Psyche. Could she  
tell

It held no beauty, but a dream of hell?

#### PSYCHE AND VENUS

*Metamorph.*, Lib. VI

AND Psyche brought to Venus what was  
sent

By Pluto's spouse; the paler, that she  
went

So low to seek it, down the dark  
descent.

MERCURY CARRIES PSYCHE TO  
OLYMPUS

*Metamorph.*, Lib. VI

THEN Jove commanded the god Mercury  
To float up Psyche from the earth.  
And she  
Sprang at the first word, as the fountain  
springs,  
And shot up bright and rustling through  
his wings.

MARRIAGE OF PSYCHE AND CUPID

*Metamorph.*, Lib VI

AND Jove's right-hand approached the  
ambrosial bowl  
To Psyche's lips, that scarce dared  
yet to smile,—  
'Drink, O my daughter, and acquaint  
thy soul  
With deathless uses, and be glad the  
while!  
Nomore shall Cupid leave thy lovely side;  
Thy marriage-joy begins for never-  
ending.'  
While yet he spake,—the nuptial feast  
supplied,—  
The bridegroom on the festive couch  
was bending  
O'er Psyche in his bosom—Jove, the  
same,  
On Juno, and the other deities,  
Alike ranged round. The rural cup-boy  
came  
And poured Jove's nectar out with  
shining eyes,  
While Bacchus, for the others, did as  
much,  
And Vulcan spread the meal; and  
all the Hours  
Made all things purple with a sprinkle  
of flowers,  
Or roses chiefly, not to say the touch  
Of their sweet fingers; and the  
Graces glided  
Their balm around, and the Muses,  
through the air,  
Struck out clear voices, which were  
still divided

By that divinest song Apollo there  
Intoned to his lute; while Aphrodite  
fair  
Did float her beauty along the tune, and  
play  
The notes right with her feet. And  
thus, the day  
Through every perfect mood of joy was  
carried.  
The Muses sang their chorus; Satyrus  
Did blow his pipes; Pan touched his  
reed;—and thus  
At last were Cupid and his Psyche  
married.

PARAPHRASES ON NONNUS

HOW BACCHUS FINDS ARIADNE  
SLEEPING

*Dionysiaca*, Lib. XLVII

WHEN Bacchus first beheld the desolate  
And sleeping Ariadne, wonder straight  
Was mixed with love in his great golden  
eyes;  
He turned to his Bacchantes in surprise,  
And said with guarded voice,—'Hush!  
strike no more  
Your brazen cymbals; keep those voices  
still  
Of voice and pipe; and since ye stand  
before  
Queen Cypris, let her slumber as she  
will!  
And yet the cestus is not here in proof.  
A Grace, perhaps, whom sleep has stolen  
aloof:  
In which case, as the morning shines in  
view,  
Wake this Aglaia!—yet in Naxos, who  
Would veil a Grace so? Hush! And if  
that she  
Were Hebe, which of all the gods can be  
The pourer-out of wine? or if we think  
She's like the shining moon by ocean's  
brink,  
The guide of herds,—why, could she  
sleep without  
Endymion's breath on her cheek? or if  
I doubt

Of silver-footed Thetis, used to tread  
These shores,—even *she* (in reverence  
be it said)

Has no such rosy beauty to dress deep  
With the blue waves. The Loxian  
goddess might

Repose so from her hunting-toil aright  
Beside the sea, since toil gives birth to  
sleep,

But who would find her with her tunic  
loose,

Thus? Stand off, Thracian! stand off!  
Do not leap,

Not this way! Leave that piping, since  
I choose,

O dearest Pan, and let Athenè rest!

And yet if *she* be Pallas . . truly  
guessed . .

Her lance is—where? her helm and  
aegis—where?'

—As Bacchus closed, the miserable  
Fair

Awoke at last, sprang upward from the  
sands,

And gazing wild on that wild throng  
that stands

Around, around her, and no Theseus  
there!—

Her voice went moaning over shore and  
sea,

Beside the halcyon's cry; she called her  
love;

She named her hero, and raged mad-  
deningly

Against the brine of waters; and  
above,

Sought the ship's track, and cursed the  
hours she slept;

And still the chiefest execration swept  
Against queen Paphia, mother of the  
ocean;

And cursed and prayed by times in her  
emotion

The winds all round. . . .

Her grief did make her glorious; her  
despair

Adorned her with its weight. Poor  
wailing child!

She looked like Venus when the goddess  
smiled

At liberty of godship, debonair;  
Poor Ariadne! and her eyelids fair

Hid looks beneath them lent her by Per-  
suasion

And every Grace, with tears of Love's  
own passion.

She wept long; then she spake:—  
'Sweet sleep did come

While sweetest Theseus went. Oh, glad  
and dumb,

I wish he had left me still! for in my sleep  
I saw his Athens, and did gladly keep

My new bride-state within my Theseus'  
hall;

And heard the pomp of Hymen, and the  
call

Of "Ariadne, Ariadne," sung  
In choral joy; and there, with joy I hung

Spring-blossoms round love's altar!—  
aye, and wore

A wreath myself; and felt *him* evermore,  
Oh, evermore beside me, with his mighty

Grave head bowed down in prayer to  
Aphroditè!

Why, what a sweet, sweet dream! *He*  
went with it,

And left me here unwedded where I sit!  
Persuasion help me! The dark night did

make me

A brideship, the fair morning takes  
away;

My Love had left me when the Hour  
did wake me;

And while I dreamed of marriage, as  
I say,

And blest it well, my blessed Theseus  
left me:

And thus the sleep, I loved so, has  
bereft me.

Speak to me, rocks, and tell my grief  
to-day,

Who stole my love of Athens?' . . .

#### HOW BACCHUS COMFORTS ARIADNE

*Dionysiaca*, Lib. XLVII

THEN Bacchus' subtle speech her sorrow  
crossed:—

'O maiden, dost thou mourn for having  
lost

The false Athenian heart? and dost thou  
still

Take thought of Theseus, when thou  
mayst at will

Have Bacchus for a husband? Bacchus  
bright!  
A god in place of mortal! Yes, and  
though  
The mortal youth be charming in thy  
sight,  
That man of Athens cannot strive below,  
In beauty and valour, with my deity!  
Thou'lt tell me of the labyrinthine  
dweller,  
The fierce man-bull, he slew: I pray  
thee, be,  
Fair Ariadne, the true deed's true teller,  
And mention thy clue's help! because,  
forsooth,  
Thine armed Athenian hero had not  
found  
A power to fight on that prodigious  
ground,  
Unless a lady in her rosy youth  
Had lingered near him: not to speak  
the truth  
Too definitely out till names be known—  
Like Paphia's—Love's—and Ariadne's  
own.  
Thou wilt not say that Athens can com-  
pare  
With Aether, nor that Minos rules like  
Zeus,  
Nor yet that Gnosus has such golden  
air  
As high Olympus. Ha! for noble use  
We came to Naxos! Love has well in-  
tended  
To change thy bridegroom! Happy  
thou, defended  
From entering in thy Theseus' earthly  
hall,  
That thou mayst hear the laughter rise  
and fall  
Instead, where Bacchus rules! Or wilt  
thou choose  
A still-surpassing glory!—take it all,—  
A heavenly house, Kronion's self for  
kin,—  
A place where Cassiopea sits within  
Inferior light, for all her daughter's  
sake,  
Since Perseus, even amid the stars, must  
take  
Andromeda in chains ethereal!  
But I will wreath thee, sweet, an astral  
crown,

And as my queen and spouse thou shalt  
be known—  
Mine, the crown-lover's! Thus, at  
length, he proved  
His comfort on her; and the maid was  
moved;  
And casting Theseus' memory down the  
brine,  
She straight received the troth of her  
divine  
Fair Bacchus; Love stood by to close  
the rite:  
The marriage-chorus struck up clear and  
light,  
Flowers sprouted fast about the chamber  
green,  
And with spring-garlands on their heads,  
I ween,  
The Orchomenian dancers came along  
And danced their rounds in Naxos to  
the song.  
A Hamadryad sang a nuptial dit  
Right shrilly: and a Naiad sate beside  
A fountain, with her bare foot shelving it,  
And hymned of Ariadne, beauteous bride,  
Whom thus the god of grapes had deified.  
Ortygia sang out, louder than her wont,  
An ode which Phoebus gave her to be  
tried,  
And leapt in chorus, with her steadfast  
front,  
While prophet Love, the stars have  
called a brother,  
Burnt in his crown, and twined in one  
another  
His love-flower with the purple roses,  
given  
In type of that new crown assigned in  
heaven.

## PARAPHRASE ON HESIOD

## BACCHUS AND ARIADNE

*Theog.* 947

THE golden-haired Bacchus did espouse  
That fairest Ariadne, Minos' daughter,  
And made her wifehood blossom in the  
house;  
Where such protective gifts Kronion  
brought her,  
Nor Death nor Age could find her when  
they sought her.

## PARAPHRASE ON EURIPIDES

## ANTISTROPHE

*Troades*, 853<sup>1</sup>

LOVE, Love, who once didst pass the  
Dardan portals,

Because of Heavenly passion !  
Who once didst lift up Troy in exultation,  
To mingle in thy bond the high Im-  
mortals !—

Love, turned from his own name

To Zeus's shame,

Can help no more at all.

And Eos' self, the fair, white-steeded  
Morning,—

*Her* light which blesses other lands,  
returning,

Has changed to a gloomy pall !

She looked across the land with eyes of  
amber,—

She saw the city's fall,—

She, who, in pure embraces,

Had held there, in the hymeneal chamber,  
Her children's father, bright Tithonus  
old,

Whom the four steeds with starry brows  
and paces

Bore on, snatched upward, on the car of  
gold,

And with him, all the land's full hope  
of joy !

The love-charms of the gods are vain for  
Troy.

## PARAPHRASES ON HOMER

## HECTOR AND ANDROMACHE

*Iliad*, Lib. VI

SHE rushed to meet him: the nurse  
following

Bore on her bosom the unsaddened child,  
A simple babe, prince Hector's well-  
loved son,

Like a star shining when the world is dark.  
Scamandrius, Hector called him; but  
the rest

Named him Astyanax, the city's prince,  
Because that Hector only, had saved  
Troy.

<sup>1</sup> Rendered after Mr. Burges's, reading. in  
some respects—not quite all.

He, when he saw his son, smiled silently;  
While, dropping tears, Andromache  
pressed on,  
And clung to his hand, and spake, and  
named his name.

'Hector, my best one,—thine own  
nobleness

Must needs undo thee. Pity hast thou  
none

For this young child, and this most sad  
myself,

Who soon shall be thy widow—since  
that soon

The Greeks will slay thee in the general  
rush—

And then, for me, what refuge, 'rest of  
*thee*,

But to go graveward ? Then, no comfort  
more

Shall touch me, as in the old sad times  
thou know'st—

Grief only—grief ! I have no father now,  
No mother mild ! Achilles the divine,

*He* slew my father, sacked his lofty  
Thebes,

Cilicia's populous city, and slew its king,  
Eëtion—father !—did not spoil the corse,

Because the Greek revered him in his soul,  
But burnt the body with its daedal arms,

And poured the dust out gently. Round  
that tomb

The Oreads, daughters of the goat-nursed  
Zeus,

Tripped in a ring, and planted their  
green elms.

There were seven brothers with me in  
the house,

Who all went down to Hades in one  
day,—

For *he* slew all, Achilles the divine,  
Famed for his swift feet,—slain among  
their herds

Of cloven-footed bulls and flocking sheep !  
My mother too, who queened it o'er the  
woods

Of Hippoplacia, he, with other spoil,  
Seized,—and, for golden ransom, freed  
too late,—

Since, as she went home, arrowy Artemis  
Met her and slew her at my father's door.

But—oh, my Hector,—thou art still to  
me

Father and mother!—yes, and brother dear,

O thou, who art my sweetest spouse beside!

Come now, and take me into pity! Stay I' the town here with us! Do not make thy child

An orphan, nor a widow, thy poor wife! Call up the people to the fig-tree, where The city is most accessible, the wall Most easy of assault!—for thrice thereby The boldest Greeks have mounted to the breach,—

Both Ajaxes, the famed Idomeneus, Two sons of Atreus, and the noble one Of Tydeus,—whether taught by some wise seer,

Or by their own souls prompted and inspired.'

Great Hector answered:—'Lady, for these things

It is my part to care. And I fear most My Trojans, and their daughters, and their wives,

Who through their long veils would glance scorn at me,

If, coward-like, I shunned the open war. Nor doth my own soul prompt me to that end!

I learnt to be a brave man constantly, And to fight foremost where my Trojans fight,

And vindicate my father's glory and mine—

Because I know, by instinct and my soul,

The day comes that our sacred Troy must fall,

And Priam and his people. Knowing which,

I have no such grief for all my Trojans' sake,

For Hecuba's, for Priam's, our old king, Not for my brothers', who so many and brave

Shall bite the dust before our enemies,—As, sweet, for *thee*!—to think some mailed Greek

Shall lead thee weeping and deprive thy life

Of the free sun-sight—that, when gone away

To Argos, thou shalt throw the distaff there,

Not for thy uses—or shalt carry instead Upon thy loathing brow, as heavy as doom,

The water of Greek wells—Messeis' own, Or Hyperea's!—that some stander-by, Marking thy tears fall, shall say, "This is She,

The wife of that same Hector who fought best

Of all the Trojans, when all fought for Troy—'

Aye!—and, so speaking, shall renew thy pang

That, 'reft of Him so named, thou shouldst survive

To a slave's life! But earth shall hide my corse

Ere that shriek sound, wherewith thou art dragged from Troy.'

Thus Hector spake, and stretched his arms to his child.

Against the nurse's breast, with childly cry,

The boy clung back, and shunned his father's face,

And feared the glittering brass and waving hair

Of the high helmet, nodding horror down. The father smiled, the mother could not choose

But smile too. Then he lifted from his brow

The helm, and set it on the ground to shine:

Then, kissed his dear child—raised him with both arms,

And thus invoked Zeus and the general gods:—

'Zeus, and all godships! grant this boy of mine

To be the Trojans' help, as I myself,—To live a brave life and rule well in Troy!

Till men shall say, "The son exceeds the sire

By a far glory." Let him bring home spoil Heroic, and make glad his mother's heart.'

With which prayer, to his wife's extended arms

He gave the child ; and she received him  
straight  
To her bosom's fragrance—smiling up  
her tears.  
Hector gazed on her till his soul was  
moted ;  
Then softly touched her with his hand  
and spake.  
'My best one—'ware of passion and  
excess  
In any fear. There's no man in the world  
Can send me to the grave apart from  
fate,—  
And no man . . Sweet, I tell thee . . can  
fly fate—  
No good nor bad man. Doom is self-  
fulfilled.  
But now, go home, and ply thy woman's  
task  
Of wheel and distaff ! bid thy maidens  
haste  
Their occupation. War's a care for  
men—  
For all men born in Troy, and chief for me.'  
Thus spake the noble Hector, and re-  
sumed  
His crested helmet, while his spouse  
went home ;  
But as she went, still looked back lovingly,  
Dropping the tears from her reverted face.

## THE DAUGHTERS OF PANDARUS

*Odys. Lib. XX*

AND so these daughters fair of Pandarus,  
The whirlwinds took. The gods had  
slain their kin :  
They were left orphans in their father's  
house.  
And Aphrodite came to comfort them  
With incense, luscious honey, and fra-  
grant wine ;  
And Here gave them beauty of face and  
soul  
Beyond all women ; purest Artemis  
Endowed them with—her stature and  
white grace ;  
And Pallas taught their hands to flash  
along  
Her famous looms. Then, bright with  
deity,

Toward far Olympus, Aphrodite went  
To ask of Zeus (who has his thunder-joys  
And his full knowledge of man's mingled  
fate)  
How best to crown those other gifts  
with love  
And worthy marriage : but, what time  
she went,  
The ravishing Harpies snatched the  
maids away,  
And gave them up, for all their loving  
eyes,  
To serve the Furies who hate constantly.

## ANOTHER VERSION

So the storms bore the daughters of  
Pandarus out into thrall—  
The gods slew their parents ; the orphans  
were left in the hall.  
And there, came, to feed their young  
lives, Aphrodite divine,  
With the incense, the sweet-tasting  
honey, the sweet-smelling wine ;  
Here brought them her wit above  
woman's, and beauty of face ;  
And pure Artemis gave them her stature,  
that form might have grace :  
And Athenè instructed their hands in  
her works of renown ;  
Then, afar to Olympus, divine Aphrodite  
moved on :  
To complete other gifts, by uniting each  
girl to a mate,  
She sought Zeus, who has joy in the  
thunder and knowledge of fate,  
Whether mortals have good chance or  
ill ! But the Harpies alate  
In the storm came, and swept off the  
maidens, and gave them to wait,  
With that love in their eyes, on the  
Furies who constantly hate.

## PARAPHRASE ON ANACREON

## ODE TO THE SWALLOW

Thou indeed, little Swallow,  
A sweet yearly comer,  
Art building a hollow  
New nest every summer,  
And straight dost depart  
Where no gazing can follow,

# PARAPHRASE ON ANACREON

Past Memphis, down Nile!  
 Ah! but Love all the while  
 Builds his nest in my heart,  
 Through the cold winter-weeks:  
 And as one Love takes flight,  
 Comes another, O Swallow,  
 In an egg warm and white,  
 And another is callow.  
 And the large gaping beaks  
 Chirp all day and all night:  
 And the Loves who are older  
 Help the young and the poor Loves,  
 And the young Loves grown bolder  
 Increase by the score Loves—  
 Why, what can be done?  
 If a noise comes from one,  
 Can I bear all this rout of a hundred and  
 more Loves?

## PARAPHRASES ON HEINE

[THE LAST TRANSLATION]

ROME, 1860

I

I

Out of my own great woe  
 I make my little songs,  
 Which rustle their feathers in throngs  
 And beat on her heart even so.

II

They found the way, for their part,  
 Yet come again, and complain,  
 Complain, and are not fain  
 To say what they saw in her heart.

II

I

ART thou indeed so adverse?  
 Art thou so changed indeed?  
 Against the woman who wrongs me  
 I cry to the world in my need.

II

O recreant lips unthankful,  
 How could ye speak evil, say,  
 Of the man who so well has kissed you  
 On many a fortunate day?

III

I

My child, we were two children,  
 Small, merry by childhood's law;  
 We used to crawl to the hen-house  
 And hide ourselves in the straw.

II

We crowed like cocks, and whenever  
 The passers near us drew—  
 Cock-a-doodle! they thought  
 'Twas a real cock that crew.

III

The boxes about our courtyard  
 We carpeted to our mind,  
 And lived there both together—  
 Kept house in a noble kind.

IV

The neighbour's old cat often  
 Came to pay us a visit;  
 We made her a bow and curtsy,  
 Each with a compliment in it.

V

After her health we asked,  
 Our care and regard to evince—  
 (We have made the very same speeches  
 To many an old cat since).

VI

We also sate and wisely  
 Discoursed, as old folks do,  
 Complaining how all went better  
 In those good times we knew,—

VII

How love and truth and believing  
 Had left the world to itself,  
 And how so dear was the coffee,  
 And how so rare was the pelf.

VIII

The children's games are over,  
 The rest is over with youth—  
 The world, the good games, the good  
 times,  
 The belief, and the love, and the truth.

## IV

## I

THOU lovest me not, thou lovest me not!  
 'Tis scarcely worth a sigh :  
 Let me look in thy face, and no king in  
 his place  
 Is a gladder man than I.

## II

Thou hatest me well, thou hatest me  
 well—  
 Thy little red mouth has told :  
 Let it reach me a kiss, and, however it is,  
 My child, I am well consoled.

## V

## I

My own sweet Love, if thou in the  
 grave,  
 The darksome grave, wilt be,  
 Then will I go down by the side, and  
 crave  
 Love-room for thee and me.

## II

I kiss and caress and press thee wild,  
 Thou still, thou cold, thou white !  
 I wail, I tremble, and weeping mild,  
 Turn to a corpse at the right.

## III

The Dead stand up, the midnight  
 calls,  
 They dance in airy swarms—  
 We two keep still where the grave-  
 shade fails,  
 And I lie on in thine arms.

## IV

The Dead stand up, the Judgement-  
 day  
 Bids such to weal or woe—  
 But nought shall trouble us where we  
 stay  
 Embraced and embracing below.

## VI

## I

THE years they come and go,  
 The races drop in the grave,  
 Yet never the love doth so,  
 Which here in my heart I have.

## II

Could I see thee but once, one day,  
 And sink down so on my knee,  
 And die in thy sight while I say,  
 'Lady, I love but thee !'

# SOME ACCOUNT OF THE GREEK CHRISTIAN POETS<sup>1</sup>

## I

THE Greek language was a strong intellectual life, stronger than any similar one which has lived in the breath of 'articulately speaking men,' and survived it. No other language has lived so long and died so hard,—pang by pang, each with a dolphin colour—yielding reluctantly to that doom of death and silence which must come at last to the speaker and the speech. Wonderful it is to look back fathoms down the great past, thousands of years away—where whole generations lie unmade to dust—where the sounding of their trumpets, and the rushing of their scythed chariots, and that great shout which brought down the birds stone dead from beside the sun, are more silent than the dog breathing at our feet, or the fly's paces on our window-pane; and yet, from the heart of which silence, to feel *words* rise up like a smoke—words of men, even words of women, uttered at first, perhaps, in 'excellent low voices,' but audible and distinct to our times, through 'the dreadful pother' of life and death, the hissing of the steam-engine and the cracking of the cerement! It is wonderful to look back and listen. Blind Homer spoke this Greek after blind Demodocus, with a quenchless light about his brows, which he felt through his blindness. Pindar rolled his chariots in it, prolonging the clamour of the games. Sappho's heart beat through it, and heaved up the world's. Aeschylus strained it to the stature of his high thoughts. Plato crowned it with his divine peradventures. Aristophanes made it drunk with

the wine of his fantastic merriment. The later Platonists wove their souls away in it, out of sight of other souls. The first Christians heard in it God's new revelation, and confessed their Christ in it from the suppliant's knee, and presently from the bishop's throne. To all times, and their transitions, the language lent itself. Through the long summer of above two thousand years, from the grasshopper Homer sang of, to that grasshopper of Manuel Phile, which might indeed have been 'a burden,' we can in nowise mistake the chirping of the bloodless, deathless, wondrous creature. It chirps on in Greek still. At the close of that long summer, though Greece lay withered to her root, her academic groves and philosophic gardens all leafless and bare, still from the depth of the desolation rose up the voice—

O cuckoo, shall I call thee bird,  
Or but a wandering voice?

which did not grow hoarse, like other cuckoos, but sang not unsweetly, if more faintly than before. Strangely vital was this Greek language—

Some straggling spirits were behind, to be  
Laid out with most thrift on its memory.

It seemed as if nature could not part with so lovely a tune, as if she felt it ringing on still in her head—or as if she hummed it to herself, as the watchman used to do, with 'night wandering round' him, when he watched wearily on the palace roof of the doomed house of Atreus.

But, although it is impossible to touch with a thought the last estate of Greek poetical literature without the wonder occurring of its being still Greek, still

<sup>1</sup> Originally printed in the *Athenaeum*, February and March, 1842.

poetry,—though we are startled by the phenomenon of lifelike sounds coming up from the ashes of a mighty people—at the aspect of an Alcestis returned from the dead, *voiled* but identical,—we are forced to admit, after the first pause of admiration, that a change has passed upon the great thing we recognize, a change proportionate to the greatness, and involving a caducity. Therefore, in adventuring some imperfect account of the Greek ecclesiastical poets, it is right to premise it with the full and frank admission, that they are not accomplished poets—that they do not, in fact, reach with their highest lifted hand, the lowest foot of those whom the world has honoured as Greek poets, but who have honoured the world more by their poetry. The instrument of the Greek tongue was, at the Christian era, an antique instrument, somewhat worn, somewhat stiff in the playing, somewhat deficient in notes which it had once, somewhat feeble and uncertain in such as it retained. The subtlety of the ancient music, the variety of its cadences, the intersections of sweetness in the rise and fall of melodies, rounded and contained in the unity of its harmony, are as utterly lost to this later period as the digamma was to an earlier one. We must not seek for them; we shall not find them; their place knows them no more. Not only was there a lack in the instrument—there was also a deficiency in the players. Thrown aside, after the old flute-story, by a goddess, it was taken up by a mortal hand—by the hand of men gifted and noble in their generation, but belonging to it intellectually, even by their gifts and their nobleness. Another immortal, a true genius, might—nay, would—have asserted himself, and wrung a poem of almost the ancient force from the infirm instrument. It is easy to fancy, and to wish that it had been so—that some martyr or bishop, when bishops were martyrs, and the earth was still warm with the Sacrificial blood, had been called to the utterance of his soul's devotion, with the emphasis of a great poet's power. No one, how-

ever, was so called. Of all the names which shall presently be reckoned, and of which it is the object of this sketch to give some account, beseeching its readers to hold several in honourable remembrance, not one can be crowned with a steady hand as a true complete poet's name. Such a crown is a sacred dignity, and, as it should not be touched idly, it must not be used here. A born Warwick could find, here, no head for a crown.

Yet we shall reckon names 'for remembrance,' and speak of things not ignoble—of meek heroic Christians, and heavenward faces washed serene by tears—strong knees bending humbly for the very strength's sake—bright intellects burning often to the winds in fantastic shapes, but oftener still with an honest inward heat, vehement on heart and brain—most eloquent fallible lips that convince us less than they persuade—a divine loquacity of human falsities—poetical souls, that are not souls of poets! Surely not ignoble things! And the reader will perceive at once that the writer's heart is not laid beneath the wheels of a cumbrous ecclesiastical antiquity—that its intent is to love what is lovable, to honour what is honourable, and to kiss both through the dust of centuries, but by no means to recognize a *hierarchy*, whether in the church or in literature.

If, indeed, an opinion on the former relation might be regarded here, it would be well to suggest that to these 'Fathers,' as we call them filially, with heads turned away, we owe more reverence for the greyness of their beards than theological gratitude for the outstretching of their hands. Devoted and disinterested as many among them were, they themselves were at most times evidently and consciously surer of their *love*, in a theologic sense, than of their knowledge in any. It is no place for a reference to religious controversy; and if it were, we are about to consider them simply as poets, without trenching on the very wide ground of their prose works and ecclesiastical opinions. Still,

one passing remark may be admissible, since the fact is so remarkable—how any body of Christian men can profess to derive their opinions from ‘the opinions of the Fathers,’ when *all* bodies might do so equally. These fatherly opinions are, in truth, multifarious, and multitudinous as the fatherly ‘sublime grey hairs.’ There is not only a father apiece for every child, but, not to speak it unfilially, a piece of every father for every child. Justin Martyr would, of himself, set up a wilderness of sects, besides ‘something over,’ for the future ramifications of each several one. What then should be done with our ‘Fathers’? Leave them to perish by the time-Ganges, as old men innocent and decrepit, and worthy of no use or honour! Surely not. We may learn of them, if God will let us, *love*, and love is much—we may learn devotedness of them and warm our hearts by theirs; and this, although we rather distrust them as commentators, and utterly refuse them the reverence of our souls, in the capacity of theological oracles.

Their place in literature, which we have to do with to-day, may be found, perhaps, by a like moderation. That place is not, it has been admitted, of the highest; and that it is not of the lowest the proof will presently be attempted. There is a mid-air kingdom of the birds called Nephelococcygia, of which the tophanes tells us something; and to might stand there a moment to measure the local adaptitude, by the Promethean umbrella to his ‘men the ‘Gods,’ if it were not for the ‘Gods,’ lower down. As it is, the very suggestion, if persisted in, would sink all the ecclesiastical antiquity it is desirable to find far for, to all eternity, in the estimation of the kindest reader. No! the mid-air kingdom of the birds will not serve the wished-for purpose even illustratively, and by grace of the nightingale. ‘May the sweet saints pardon us’ for wronging them by an approach to such a sense, which, if attained and determined, would have consigned them so certainly to what

St. Augustine called—when he was moderate too—*mitissima damnatio*, a very mild species of damnation.

It would be, in fact, a rank injustice to the beauty we are here to recognize, to place these writers in the rank of mediocrities, supposing the harsh sense. They may be called mediocrities as poets among poets, but not so as no poets at all. Some of them may sing before gods and men, and in front of any column, from Trajan’s to that projected one in Trafalgar Square, to which is promised the miraculous distinction of making the National Gallery sink lower than we see it now. They may, as a body, sing exultingly, holding the relation of column to gallery, in front of the whole ‘corpus’ of Latin ecclesiastical poetry, and claim the world’s ear and the poet’s palm. That the modern Latin poets have been more read by scholars, and are better known, by reputation to the general reader, is unhappily true: but this is involuntarily, and reason why it can be no greater advantage. The vicissitudes of life is exulting to posthumous fame, and Time, as justice to the poet, is sometimes busy in pulverizing bones to give the weight to memories. The modern poets, ‘elegant’—which is the critic’s word to spend upon them—elegant as they are occasionally, polished and accurate as they are comparatively, stand cold and lifeless, with statue-eyes, near these good, fervid, faulty Greeks of ours—and we do not care to look again. Our Greeks do, in their degree, claim their ancestral advantage, not the mere advantage of language,—nay, least the advantage of language, a comparative elegance and accuracy of expression being ceded to the Latins,—but that higher distinction inherent in brain and breast, of vivid thought and quick sensibility. What if we swamp for a moment the Tertullians and Prudentiuses, and touch, by a permitted anachronism, with one hand Vida, with the other Gregory Nazianzen, what then? What though the Italian poet be



confounding him with the prophet; and the circumstance of the latter's inspiration is sufficiently distinguishing. Our Greek Ezekiel is, indeed, whatever his chronology may be, no *vales* in the ancient sense. A Greek tragedy (and some fragments of a tragedy are all that we hold of him), by a Jew, and on a Jewish subject, *The Exodus from Egypt*, may startle the most serene of us into curiosity—with which curiosity begins and ends the only strong feeling we can bring to bear upon the work; since, if the execution of it is somewhat curious too, there is a gentle collateral dullness which effectually secures us from feverish excitement. Moses prologizes after the worst manner of Euripides (worse than the worse), compendiously relating his adventures among the bulrushes and in Pharaoh's household, concluded by his slaying an Egyptian, *because nobody was looking*. So saith the poet. Then follows an interview between the Israelite and Zipporah, and her companions, wherein he puts to her certain geographical questions, and she (as far as we can make out through fragmentary cracks) rather *brusquely* proposes their mutual marriage: on which subject he does not venture an opinion; but we find him next confiding his dreams in a family fashion to her father, who considers them satisfactory. Here occurs a broad crack down the tragedy—and we are suddenly called to the revelation from the bush by an extraordinarily ordinary dialogue between Deity and Moses. It is a surprising specimen of the kind of composition adverted to some lines ago, as the translation of Scripture into prose; and the sublime simplicity of the scriptural narrative being thus done (away) into Greek for a certain time, the following reciprocation—to which our old moralities can scarcely do more, or less, than furnish a parallel—prays for an English—exposure. The Divine Being is supposed to address Moses:—

But what is this thou holdest in thine hand?—  
Let thy reply be sudden.

*Moses.* 'Tis my rod—  
I chasten with it quadrupeds and men.  
*Voice from the Bush.* Cast it upon the ground—and straight recoil;  
For it shall be, to move thy wonderment,  
A terrible serpent.  
*Moses.* It is cast. But THOU,  
Be gracious to me, Lord. How terrible!  
How monstrous! Oh, be pitiful to me!  
I shudder to behold it, my limbs shake.

The reader is already consoled for the destiny which mutilated the tragedy, without requiring the last words of the analysis. Happily characteristic of the 'meekest of men' is Moses's naïve admission of the uses of his rod—to beat men and animals withal—of course 'when nobody is looking.'

Clemens Alexandrinus, to whom we owe whatever gratitude is due for our fragmentary Ezekiel, was originally an Athenian philosopher, afterwards a converted Christian, a Presbyter of the Church at Alexandria, and preceptor of the famous Origen. Clemens flourished at the close of the second century. As a prose writer—and we have no prose writings of his, except such as were produced subsequently to his conversion—he is learned and various. His 'Pedagogue' is a wanderer, to universal intents and purposes; and his 'Tapestry,' if the *Stromata* may be called so, is embroidered in all cross-stitches of philosophy, with not much scruple as to the shading of colours. In the midst of all is something, ycleped a dithyrambic ode, addressed to the Saviour, composite of fantastic epithets in the mode of the old litanies, and almost as bald of merit as the Jew-Greek drama, though Clemens himself (worthier in worthier places) be the poet. Here is the opening, which is less fanciful than what follows it:—

Curb for wild horses,  
Wing for bird-courses  
Never yet flown!  
Helm, safe for weak ones,  
Shepherd, bespeak once,  
The young lambs thine own.  
Rouse up the youth,  
Shepherd and feeder,

So let them bless thee,  
 Praise and confess thee,—  
 Pure words on pure mouth,—  
 Christ, the child-leader !  
 Oh, the saints' Lord,  
 All-dominant word !  
 Holding, by Christdom,  
 God's highest wisdom !  
 Column in place  
 When sorrows seize us,—  
 Endless in grace  
 Unto man's race,  
 Saving one, Jesus !  
 Pastor and ploughman,  
 Helm, curb, together,—  
 Pinion that now can  
 (Heavenly of feather)  
 Raise and release us !  
 Fisher who catcheth  
 Those whom he watcheth. . .

It goes on ; but we need not do so.  
 'By the pricking of our thumbs,' we  
 know that the reader has had enough  
 of it.

## II

PASSING rapidly into the fourth century,  
 we would offer our earliest homage to  
 Gregory Nazianzen.

That name must ever be to us a friend,

when the two Apolinarii cross our path  
 and intercept the 'all hail.' Apolinarius  
 the grammarian, formerly of Alexandria,  
 held the office of presbyter in the church  
 of Laodicea, and his son Apolinarius,  
 an accomplished rhetorician, that of  
*reader*, an ancient ecclesiastical office,  
 in the same church. This younger  
 Apolinarius was a man of indomitable  
 energies and most practical inferences ;  
 and when the edict of Julian forbade to  
 the Christians the study of Grecian  
 letters, he, assisted perhaps by his  
 father's hope and hand, stood strong in  
 the gap, not in the attitude of supplica-  
 tion, not with the gesture of consolation,  
 but in power and sufficiency to fill up  
 the void and baffle the tyrant. Both  
 father and son were in the work, by  
 some testimony ; the younger Apoli-  
 narius standing out, by all, as the chief  
 worker, and only one in any extensive

sense. 'Does Julian deny us Homer ?'  
 said the brave man in his armed soul—  
 'I am Homer !' and straightway he  
 turned the whole Biblical history, down  
 to Saul's accession, into Homeric hexa-  
 meters—dividing the work, so as to  
 clench the identity of first and second  
 Homers, into twenty-four books, each  
 superscribed by a letter of the alphabet,  
 and the whole acceptable, according to  
 the expression of Sozomen, *ἀντὶ τῆς*  
*Ὀμήρου ποιήσεως*, in the place of Homer's  
 poetry. 'Does Julian deny us Euri-  
 pides ?' said Apolinarius again—'I am  
 Euripides !' and up he sprang—as good  
 a Euripides (who can doubt it ?) as he  
 ever was a Homer. 'Does Julian forbid  
 us Menander ?—Pindar ?—Plato ?—I am  
 Menander !—I am Pindar !—I am Plato !'  
 And comedies, lyrics, philosophics,  
 flowed fast at the word ; and the gospels  
 and epistles adapted themselves naturally  
 to the rules of Socratic disputation.  
 A brave man, forsooth, was our Apoli-  
 narius of Laodicea, and literally a man  
 of men—for observe, says Sozomen,  
 with a venerable innocence, at which  
 the gravest may smile gravely—as at  
 a doublet worn awry at the Council of  
 Nice—that the old authors did each man  
 his own work, whereas this Apolinarius  
 did every man's work in addition to his  
 own ; and so admirably—intimates the  
 ecclesiastical critic—that if it were not  
 for the common prejudice in favour of  
 antiquity, no ancient could be missed  
 in the all-comprehensive representative-  
 ness of the Laodicean writer. So  
 excellent was his ability to 'outbrave  
 the stars in several kinds of light,'  
 besides the Caesar ! Whether Julian,  
 naturally mortified to witness this ger-  
 mination of illustrious heads under the  
 very iron of his searing, vowed vengeance  
 against the Hydra-spirit, by the sacred  
 memory of the animation of his own  
 beard, we do not exactly know. To  
 embitter the wrong, Apolinarius sent  
 him a treatise upon truth—a confutation  
 of the pagan doctrine, apart from the  
 scriptural argument—the Emperor's  
 notice of which is both worthy of his  
 Caesarship, and a good model-notice

for all sorts of critical dignities. 'Ἀνέγνων ἔγνω κατέγνω, is the Greek of it; so that, turning from the letter to catch something of the point, we may write it down—'I have perused, I have mused, I have abused': which provoked as imperious a retort—'Thou mayest have perused, but thou hast not mused—for hadst thou mused, thou wouldst not have abused.' Brave Laodicean!

Apolinarius's laudable *double* of Greek literature has perished, the reader will be concerned to hear, from the face of the earth, being, like other *lusus*, or marvels, or monsters, brief of days. One only tragedy remains, with which the memory of Gregory Nazianzen has been right tragically affronted, and which Gregory —*ἐλ τις αἰσθητός*, as he said of Constantine—would cast off with the scorn and anger befitting an Apolinarian heresy. For Apolinarius, besides being an epist, dramatist, lyrist, philosopher, and rhetorician, was, we are sorry to add, in the eternal bustle of his soul, a heretic—possibly for the advantage of something additional to do. He not only intruded into the churches hymns which were not authorized, being his own composition—so that reverend brows grew dark to hear women with musical voices sing them softly to the turning of their distaff,—but he fell into the heresy of denying a human soul to the perfect MAN, and of leaving the Divinity in bare combination with the Adamic dust. No wonder that a head so beset with many thoughts and individualities should at last turn round!—that eyes rolling in fifty fine frenzies of twenty-five fine poets should at last turn blind!—that a determination to rival all geniuses should be followed by a disposition more baleful in its exercise, to understand 'all mysteries'! Nothing can be plainer than the step after step whereby, through excess of vainglory and morbid mental activity, Apolinarius, the vice-poet of Greece, subsided into Apolinarius the chief heretic of Christendom.

To go back sighingly to the tragedy, where we shall have to sigh again—the only tragedy left to us of all the tragic

works of Apolinarius (but we do not sigh for *that*!)—let no voice evermore attribute it to Gregory Nazianzen. How could Mr. Alford do so, however hesitatingly, in his *Chapters*, attaching to it, without the hesitation, a charge upon the writer, whether Gregory or another man, that *he*, whoever he was, had, of his own free will and choice, destroyed the old Greek originals out of which his tragedy was constructed, and left it a monument of their sacrifice as of the blood on his barbarian hand! The charge passes, not only before a breath, but before its own breath. The tragedy is, in fact, a specimen of *centoism*, which is the adaptation of the phraseology of one work to the construction of another; and we have only to glance at it to perceive the *Medæa* of Euripides dislocated into the *Christus Patiens*. Instead of the ancient opening—

Oh, would ship Argo had not sailed away  
To Colchos by the rough Symplegades!  
Nor ever had been felled in Pelion's grove  
The pine, hewn for her side! . . .

So she, my queen  
Medæa, had not touched this fatal shore,  
Soul-struck by love of Jason!

Apolinarius opens it thus—

Oh, would the serpent had not glode along  
To Eden's garden-land,—nor ever had  
The crafty dragon planted in that grove  
A slimy snare! So she, rib-born of man,  
The wretched misled mother of our race,  
Had dared not to dare on beyond worst  
daring,  
Soul-struck by love of—apples!

'Let us alone for keeping our countenance'—and at any rate we are bound to ask gravely of Mr. Alford, *is the Medæa destroyed?*—and if not, did the author of the *Christus Patiens* destroy his originals?—and if not, may we not say of Mr. Alford's charge against that author, 'Oh, would he had not made it!' So far from Apolinarius being guilty of destroying his originals, it was his reverence for them which struggled with the edict of the persecutor, and accomplished this dramatic adventure;—and this adventure, the only remaining

specimen of his adventurousness, may help us to the secret of his wonderful fertility and omnirepresentativeness, which is probably this—that the great majority of his works, tragic, comic, lyric, and philosophic, consisted simply of *centos*. Yet we pray for justice to Apolinarius: we pray for honour to his motives and energies. Without pausing to inquire whether it had been better and wiser to let poetry and literature depart at once before the tyranny of the edict, than to drag them back by the hair into attitudes grotesquely ridiculous—better and wiser for the Greek Christian schools to let them forgo altogether the poems of their Euripides, than adapt to the meek sorrows of the tender Virgin-mother the bold, bad, cruel frenzy of Medæa, in such verses as these—

She howls out ancient oaths, invokes the faith  
Of pledged right-hands, and calls for witness,  
God!

—we pray straightforwardly for justice and honour to the motives and energies of Apolinarius. ‘Oh, would that’ many lived *now*, as appreciative of the influences of poetry on our schools and country, as impatient of their contraction, as self-devoted in the great work of extending them! There remains of his poetical labours, besides the tragedy, a translation of David’s Psalms into ‘heroic verse,’ which the writer of these remarks has not seen,—and of which those critics who desire to deal gently with Apolinarius seem to begin their indulgence by doubting the authenticity.

It is pleasant to turn shortly round, and find ourselves face to face, not with the author of *Christus Patiens*, but with one antagonistical both to his poetry and his heresy, Gregory Nazianzen. A noble and tender man was this Gregory, and so tender, because so noble; a man to lose no cubit of his stature for being looked at steadfastly, or struck at reproachfully. ‘You may cast me down,’ he said, ‘from my bishop’s throne, but you cannot banish me from before God’s.’ And bishop as

he was, his saintly crown stood higher than his tiara, and his loving martyr-smile, the crown of a nature more benign than his fortune, shone up toward both. Son of the Bishop of Nazianzen, and holder of the diocese which was his birthplace, previous to his elevation to the level of the storm in the bishopric of Constantinople, little did he care for bishoprics or high places of any kind—the desire of his soul being for solitude, quietude, and that silent religion which should ‘rather *be* than *seem*.’ But his father’s head bent whitely before him, even in the chamber of his brother’s death,—and Basil, his beloved friend, the ‘half of his soul,’ pressed on him with the weight of love; and Gregory, feeling their tears upon his cheeks, did not count his own, but took up the priestly office. Poor Gregory! not merely as a priest, but as a man, he had a sighing life of it. His student days at Athens, where he and Basil read together poems and philosophies and holier things, or talked low and *misopogonistically* of their fellow student Julian’s bearded boding smile, were his happiest days. He says of himself,

As many stones  
Were thrown at *me*, as other men had  
flowers.

Nor was persecution the worst evil; for friend after friend, beloved after beloved, passed away from before his face, and the voice which charmed them living spoke brokenly beside their graves—his funeral orations marked severally the wounds of his heart,—and his genius served, as genius often does, to lay an emphasis on his grief. The passage we shall venture to translate is rather a cry than a song :—

Where are my winged words? Dissolved  
in air.  
Where is my flower of youth? All withered.  
Where  
My glory? Vanished! Where the strength  
I knew  
From comely limbs? Disease hath changed  
it too,

And bent them. Where the riches and the lands?

GOD HATH THEM! Yea, and sinners' snatching hands

Have grudged the rest. Where is my father, mother,

And where my blessed sister, my sweet brother?—

Gone to the grave!—There did remain for me

Alone my fatherland, till destiny, Malignly stirring a black tempest, drove

My foot from that last rest. And now I rove Estranged and desolate a foreign shore,

And drag my mournful life and age all hoar

Throneless and cityless, and childless save This father-care for children, which I have,

Living from day to day on wandering feet. Where shall I cast this body? What will

greet My sorrows with an end? What gentle

ground And hospitable grave will wrap me round? Who last my dying eyelids stoop to close—

Some saint, the Saviour's friend? or one of those

Who do not know Him?—The air interpose, And scatter these words too.

The return upon the first thought is highly pathetic, and there is a restlessness of anguish about the whole passage which consecrates it with the cross of nature. His happy Athenian associations gave a colour, unwashed out by tears, to his mind and works. Half apostolical he was, and half scholastical; and while he mused, on his bishop's throne, upon the mystic tree of twelve fruits, and the shining of the river of life, he carried, as Milton did, with a gentle and not ungraceful distraction, both hands full of green trailing branches from the banks of the Cephissus, nay, from the very plane-tree which Socrates sat under with Phædrus, when they two talked about beauty to the rising and falling of its leaves. As an orator, he was greater, all must feel if some do not think, than his contemporaries; and the 'golden mouth' might confess it meekly. Erasmus compares him to Isocrates, but the *unlikeness* is obvious: Gregory was not excellent at an artful blowing of the pipes. He spoke grandly,

as the wind does, in *gusts*; and as in a mighty wind, which combines unequal noises, the creaking of trees and rude swinging of doors, as well as the sublime sovereign rush along the valleys, we gather the idea from his eloquence less of music than of power. Not that he is cold as the wind is—the metaphor goes no further: Gregory cannot be cold, even by disfavour of his antithetic points. He is various in his oratory, full and rapid in allusion, briefly graphic in metaphor, equally sufficient for indignation or pathos, and gifted peradventure with a keener dagger of sarcasm than should hang in a saint's girdle. His orations against Julian have all these characteristics, but they are not poetry, and we must pass down lower, and quite over his beautiful letters, to Gregory the poet.

He wrote *thirty thousand verses*, among which are several long poems, severally defective in a defect common but not necessary to short occasional poems, and lamentable anywhere, a want of unity and completeness. The excellences of his prose are transcribed, with whatever faintness, in his poetry—the exaltation, the devotion, the sweetness, the pathos, even to the playing of satirical power about the graver meanings. But although noble thoughts break up the dullness of the groundwork—although, with the instinct of greater poets, he bares his heart in his poetry, and the heart is worth baring, still monotony of construction without unity of intention is the most wearisome of monotones, and, except in the case of a few short poems, we find it everywhere in Gregory. The lack of variety is extended to the cadences, and the pauses fall stiffly *come corpo morto cade*. Melodious lines we have often: harmonious passages scarcely ever—the music turning heavily on its own axle, as inadequate to living evolution. The poem on his own life (*De Vita sua*) is, in many places, interesting and affecting, yet faulty with all these faults. The poem on Celibacy, which state is commended by Gregory as becometh a bishop, has occasionally

graphic touches, but is dull enough generally to suit the fairest spinster's view of that melancholy subject. If Hercules could have read it, he must have rested in the middle—from which the reader is entreated to forbear the inference that the poem has not been read through by the writer of the present remarks, seeing that that writer marked the grand concluding moment with a white stone, and laid up the memory of it among the chief triumphs, to say nothing of the fortunate deliverances, *vita suae*. In Gregory's elegiac poems our ears, at least, are better contented, because the sequence of pentameter to hexameter necessarily excludes the various cadence which they yearn for under other circumstances. His anacreontics are sometimes nobly written, with a certain brave recklessness as if the thoughts despised the measure; and we select from this class a specimen of his poetry, both because three of his hymns have already appeared in the *Athenaeum*, and because the anacreontic in question includes to a remarkable extent the various qualities we have attributed to Gregory, not omitting that play of satirical humour with which he delights to ripple the abundant flow of his thoughts. The writer, though also a translator, feels less misgiving than usual in offering to the reader, in such English as is possible, this spirited and beautiful poem.

#### SOUL AND BODY

What wilt thou possess or be?  
O my soul, I ask of thee.  
What of great, or what of small,  
Counted precious therewithal?  
Be it only rare, and want it,  
I am ready, soul, to grant it.  
Wilt thou choose to have and hold  
Lydian Gyges' charm of old,  
So to rule us with a ring,  
Turning round the jewelled thing,  
Hidden by its face concealed,  
And revealed by its revealed?—  
Or preferrest Midas' fate—  
He who died in golden state,  
All things being changed to gold?  
Of a golden hunger dying,  
Through a surfeit of 'would I'-ing!

Wilt have jewels brightly cold?  
Or may fertile acres please?  
Or the sheep of many a fold,  
Camels, oxen, for the world?  
Nay!—I will not give thee these!  
These to take thou hast not will—  
These to give I have not skill—  
Since I cast earth's cares abroad,  
That day when I turned to God.

Wouldst a throne—a crown sublime,  
Bubble blown upon the time?  
So thou mayest sit to-morrow  
Looking downward in meek sorrow,  
Some one walking by thee scorning,  
Who adored thee yester morning,  
Some malign one?—Wilt be bound  
Fast in marriage? (joy unsound!)  
And be turned round and round  
As the time turns? Wilt thou catch it,  
That sweet sickness? and to match it  
Have babies by the hearth, bewildering?  
And if I tell thee the best children  
Are none—what answer?

Wilt thou thunder

Thy rhetorics—move the people under?  
Covetest to sell the laws  
With no justice in thy cause,  
And bear on, or else be borne,  
Before tribunals worthy scorn?  
Wilt thou shake a javelin rather  
Breathing war? or wilt thou gather  
Garlands from the wrestler's ring?  
Or kill beasts for glorying?  
Covetest the city's shout,  
And to be in brass struck out?  
Cravest thou that shade of dreaming,  
Passing air of shifting seeming,  
Rushing of a printless arrow,  
Clapping echo of a hand?  
What to those who understand  
Are to-day's enjoyments narrow,  
Which to-morrow go again,—  
Which are shared with evil men,—  
And of which no man in his dying  
Taketh aught for softer lying?  
What then wouldst thou, if thy mood  
Choose not these? what wilt thou be,  
O my soul? a deity?  
A God before the face of God,  
Standing glorious in His glories,  
Choral in His angels' chorus?

Go! upon thy wing arise,  
Plumed by quick energies,  
Mount in circles up the skies:  
And I will bless thy winged passion,  
Help with words thine exaltation,

And, like a bird of rapid feather,  
Outlaunch thee, Soul, upon the aether.

But *thou*, O fleshly nature, say,  
Thou with odours from the clay,  
Since thy presence I must have  
As a lady with a slave,  
What wouldst *thou* possess or be,  
That thy breath may stay with thee?  
Nay! I owe thee nought beside,  
Though thine hands be open wide.  
Would a table suit thy wishes,  
Fragrant with sweet oils and dishes  
Wrought to subtle niceness? where  
Stringed music strokes the air,  
And blithe hand-clappings, and the smooth  
Fine postures of the tender youth  
And virgins wheeling through the dance  
With an unveiled countenance,—  
Joys for drinkers, who love shame,  
And the maddening wine-cup's flame?—  
Wilt thou such, howe'er decried?—  
Take them,—and a *rope beside!*

Nay! this boon I give instead,  
Unto friend insatiate,—  
May some rocky house receive thee,  
Self-rooted, to conceal thee chiefly;  
Or if labour there must lurk,  
Be it by a short day's work!  
And for garment, camel's hair,  
As the righteous clothed were,  
Clothe thee! or the bestial skin  
Adam's bareness hid within,—  
Or some green thing from the way,  
Leaf of herb, or branch of vine,  
Swelling, purpling as it may,  
Fearless to be drunk for wine!  
Spread a table there beneath thee,  
Which a sweetness shall upbreathe thee,  
And which the dearest earth is giving,  
Simple present to all living!  
When that we have placed thee near it,  
We will feed thee with glad spirit.  
Wilt thou eat? soft, take the bread,  
Oaten cake, if that bestead—  
Salt will season all aright,  
And thine own good appetite,  
Which we measure not, nor fetter:  
'Tis an uncooked condiment,  
Famine's self the only better.  
Wilt thou drink? why, here doth bubble  
Water from a cup unspent,  
Followed by no tipsy trouble,  
Pleasure sacred from the grape!  
Wilt thou have it in some shape  
More like luxury? we are  
No grudgers of wine-vinegar!  
But if all will not suffice thee,

And thou covetest to draw  
In that pitcher with a flaw,  
Brimful pleasures heaven denies thee!  
Go, and seek out, by that sign,  
Other help than this of mine!  
For me, I have not leisure so  
To warm thee, sweet, my household foe,  
Until, like a serpent frozen,  
New-maddened with the heat, thou loosen  
Thy rescued fang within mine heart!

Wilt have measureless delights  
Of gold-roofed palaces, and sights  
From pictured or from sculptured art,  
With motion near their life; and splendour  
Of bas-relief, with tracery tender,  
And varied and contrasted hues?  
Wilt thou have, as nobles use,  
Broidered robes to flow about thee?  
Jewelled fingers? Need we doubt thee?  
Gauds for which the wise will flout thee?  
I most, who of all beauty know  
It must be inward, to be so!

And thus I speak to mortals low,  
Living for the hour, and o'er  
Its shadow, seeing nothing more!  
But for those of nobler bearing,  
Who live more worthily of wearing  
A portion of the heavenly nature—  
To low estate of clayey creature,  
See, I bring the beggar's meed,  
Nutriment beyond the need!  
Oh, beholder of the Lord,  
Prove on me the flaming sword!  
Be mine husbandman, to nourish  
Holy plants, that words may flourish  
Of which mine enemy would spoil me,  
Using pleasurehood to foil me!  
Lead me closer to the tree  
Of all life's eternity;  
Which, as I have pondered, is  
The knowledge of God's greatness:  
Light of One, and shine of Three,  
Unto whom all things that be  
Flow and tend!

In such a guise,  
Whoever on the earth is wise  
Will speak unto himself,—and who  
Such inner converse would eschew,  
We say perforce of that poor wight,  
'He lived in vain!' and if *aright*,  
It is not the worst word we might.

Amphilochius, Bishop of Iconium, was beloved and much appreciated by Gregory, and often mentioned in his writings. Few of the works of Amphilochius

are extant, and of these only one is a poem. It is a didactic epistle to Seleucus, *On the Right Direction of his Studies and Life*, and has been attributed to Gregory Nazianzen by some writers, upon very inadequate evidence,—that adduced (the similar phraseology which conveys, in this poem and a poem of Gregory's, the catalogue of canonical scriptures) being as easily explained by the imitation of one poet, as by the identity of two. They differ, moreover, upon ground more important than phraseology: Amphilocheus appearing to reject, or, at least, to receive doubtfully, Jude's epistle, and the Second of Peter. And there is a harsh force in the whole poem, which does not remind us of our Nazianzen, while it becomes, in the course of dissuading Seleucus from the amusements of the amphitheatre, graphic and effective. We hear, through the description, the grinding of the tigers' teeth, the sympathy of the people with the tigers showing still more savage.

They sit unknowing of these agonies,  
Spectators at a show. When a man flies  
From a beast's jaw, they groan, as if at least  
They missed the ravenous pleasure, like the  
beast,  
And sate there vainly. When, in the next  
spring,  
The victim is attained, and, uttering  
The deep roar or quick shriek between the  
fangs,  
Beats on the dust the passion of his pangs,  
All pity dieth in their glaring look—  
They clap to see the blood run like a  
brook;  
They stare with hungry eyes, which tears  
should fill,  
And cheer the beasts on with their soul's  
good will;  
And wish more victims to their maw, and  
urge  
And lash their fury, as they shared the surge,  
Gnashing their teeth, like beasts, on flesh of  
men.

There is an appalling reality in this picture. The epistle consists of 333 lines, which we mention specifically, because the poet takes advantage of the circumstance to illustrate or enforce an important theological doctrine:—

Three hundred lines, three decads, monads  
three,  
Comprise my poem. *Love the Trinity.*

It would be almost a pain, and quite a regret, to pass from this fourth century without speaking a word which belongs to it—a word which rises to our lips, a word worthy of honour—*Heliodorus*. Though a bishop and an imaginative writer, his *Aethiopica* has no claim on our attention, either by right of Christianity or poetry; and yet we may be pardoned on our part for love's sake, and on account of the false position into which, by negligence of readers or insufficiency of translators, his beautiful romance has fallen, if we praise it heartily and faithfully even here. Our tears praised it long ago—our recollection does so now—and its own pathetic eloquence and picturesque descriptiveness are ripe for any praise. It has, besides, a vivid Arabian Night charm, almost as charming as Scheherazade herself, suggestive of an Arabian Night story drawn out 'in many a winding bout,' and not merely on the ground of extemporaneous loving and methodical (must we say it?) *lying*. In good sooth—no, not in good sooth, but in evil leasing—every hero and heroine of them all, from Abou Hassan to 'the divine Chariclaea,' does lie most vehemently and abundantly by gift of nature and choice of author, whether bishop or sultana. 'It is,' as Pepys observes philosophically of the comparative destruction of gin-shops and churches in the Great Fire of London, 'pretty to observe' how they all lie. And although the dearest of story-tellers, our own Chaucer, has told us that 'some leasing is, of which there cometh none advantage to no wight,' even that species is used by them magnanimously in its turn, for the bare glory's sake, and without caring for the 'advantage.' With equal liberality, but more truth, we write down the Bishop of Tricca's romance *charming*, and wish the charm of it (however we may be out of place in naming him among poets) upon any poet who has not yet felt it, and whose eyes, giving honour, may wander over

these remarks. The poor bishop thought as well of his book as we do, perhaps better; for when commanded, under ecclesiastical censure, to burn it or give up his bishopric, he gave up the bishopric. And who blames Heliodorus? He thought well of his romance; he was angry with those who did not; he was weak with the love of it. Let whosoever blames, speak low. Romance-writers are not educated for martyrs, and the exacted martyrdom was very very hard. Think of that English bishop who burnt his hand by an act of volition—only his hand, and which was sure to be burnt afterwards; and how he was praised for it! Heliodorus had to do with a dearer thing—handwriting, not hands. Authors will pardon him, if bishops do not.

Nonnus of Panopolis, the poet of the *Dionysiaca*, a work of some twenty-two thousand verses, on some twenty-two thousand subjects shaken together, *flourished*, as people say of many a dry-rooted soul, at the commencement of the fifth century. He was converted from paganism, but we are sorry to make the melancholy addition that he was never converted from the *Dionysiaca*. The only Christian poem we owe to him—a paraphrase, in hexameters, of the apostle John's Gospel—does all that a bald verbosity and an obscure tautology can do or undo, to quench the divinity of that divine narrative. The two well-known words, bearing on their brief vibration the whole passion of a world saved through pain from pain, are thus traduced:—

They answered him  
'Come and behold.' *Then Jesus himself*  
*groaned,*  
*Dropping strange tears from eyes unused to*  
*weep.*

'Unused to weep!' Was it so of the Man of sorrows? Oh, obtuse poet! We had translated the opening passage of the Paraphrase, and laid it by for transcription, but are repelled. Enough is said. Nonnus was never converted from the *Dionysiaca*.

## III

SYNESIUS, of Cyrene, learnt Plato's philosophy so well of Hypatia of Alexandria at the commencement of the fifth century, or rather before, that, to the obvious honour of that fair and learned teacher, he never, as Bishop of Ptolemais, could attain to unlearning it. He did not wish to be Bishop of Ptolemais; he had divers objections to the throne and the domination. He loved his dogs, he loved his wife; he loved Hypatia and Plato as well as he loved truth; and he loved beyond all things, under the womanly instruction of the former, to have his own way. He was a poet, too; the chief poet, we do not hesitate to record our opinion—the chief, for true and natural gifts, of all our Greek Christian poets; and it was his choice to pray lyrically between the dew and the cloud rather than preach dogmatically between the doxies. If Gregory shrank from the episcopal office through a meek self-distrust and a yearning for solitude, Synesius repulsed the invitation to it through an impatience of control over heart and life, and for the earnest joy's sake of thinking out his own thought in the hunting-grounds, with no deacon or disciple astuter than his dog to watch the thought in his face, and trace it backward or forward, as the case might be, into something more or less than what was orthodox. Therefore he, a man of many and wandering thoughts, refused the bishopric—not weepingly, indeed, as Gregory did, nor feigning madness with another of the *noletes episcopari* of that earnest period, but with a sturdy enunciation of resolve, more likely to be effectual, of keeping his wife by his side as long as he lived, and of doubting as long as he pleased to doubt upon the resurrection of the body. But Synesius was a man of genius, and of all such true energies as are taken for granted in the name; and the very sullenness of his nay being expressive to grave judges of the faithfulness of his 'yea and amen,' he was

considered too noble a man not to be made a bishop of in his own despite and on his own terms. The fact proves the latitude of discipline, and even of doctrine, permitted to the churches of that age; and it does not appear that the church at Ptolemais suffered any wrong as its result, seeing that Synesius, recovering from the shock militant of his ordination, in the course of which his ecclesiastical friends had 'laid hands upon him' in the roughest sense of the word, performed his new duties willingly—was no sporting bishop otherwise than as a 'fisher of men'—sent his bow to the dogs, and his dogs to Jericho, that nearest Coventry to Ptolemais, silencing his 'staunch hound's authentic voice' as soon as ever any importance became attached to the authenticity of his own. And if, according to the bond, he retained his wife and his Platonisms, we may honour him by the inference that he did so for conscience' sake still more than love's, since the love was inoperative in other matters. For spiritual fervour and exaltation he has honour among men and angels; and however intent upon spiritualizing away the most glorified material body from 'the heaven of his invention,' he held fast and earnestly, as anybody's clenched hand could a horn of the altar, the Homousion doctrine of the Christian heaven, and other chief doctrines emphasizing the divine sacrifice. But this poet has a higher place among poets than this bishop among bishops; the highest, we must repeat our conviction, of all yet named or to be named by us as 'Greek Christian poets.' Little, indeed, of his poetry has reached us, but this little is great in a nobler sense than that of quantity; and when of his odes, anacreontic for the most part, we cannot say praisefully that 'they smell of Anacreon,' it is because their fragrance is holier and more abiding—it is because the human soul burning in the censor effaces from our spiritual perceptions the attar of a thousand rose-trees whose roots are in Teos. These odes have, in fact, a wonderful rapture and ecstasy.

And if we find in them the phraseology of Plato or Plotinus, for he leant lovingly to the later Platonists—nay, if we find in them oblique references to the outworn mythology of paganism, even so have we beheld the mixed multitude of unconnected motes wheeling, rising in a great sunshine, as the sunshine were a motive energy,—and even so the burning, adoring poet-spirit sweeps upward the motes of world-fancies (as if being in the world their tendency was Godward) upward in a strong stream of sunny light, while she rushes into the presence of 'the Alone.' We say the *spirit* significantly in speaking of this poet's aspiration. His is an ecstasy of abstract intellect, of pure spirit, cold though impetuous; the heart does not beat in it, nor is the human voice heard; the poet is true to the heresy of the ecclesiastic, and there is no resurrection of the body. We shall attempt a translation of the ninth ode, closer if less graceful and polished than Mr. Boyd's, helping our hand to courage by the persuasion that the genius of its poetry must look through the thickest blanket of our dark.

Well-beloved and glory-laden,  
Born of Solyma's pure maiden !  
I would hymn Thee, blessed Warden,  
Driving from Thy Father's garden  
Blinking serpent's crafty lust,  
With his bruised head in the dust !  
Down Thou camest, low as earth,  
Bound to those of mortal birth;  
Down Thou camest, low as hell,  
Where shepherd-Death did tend and keep  
A thousand nations like to sheep,  
While weak with age old Hades fell  
Shivering through his dark to view Thee,  
And the Dog did backward yell  
With jaws all gory to let through Thee !  
So, redeeming from their pain  
Choirs of disembodied ones,  
Thou didst lead whom Thou didst gather,  
Upward in ascent again,  
With a great hymn to the Father,  
Upward to the pure white thrones !  
King, the daemon tribes of air  
Shuddered back to feel Thee there !  
And the holy stars stood breathless,  
Trembling in their chorus deathless ;

A low laughter fill'd ether—  
 Harmony's most subtle sire  
 From the seven strings of his lyre  
 Stroked a measured music hither—  
 Io paean! victory!  
 Smiled the star of morning—he  
 Who smileth to foreshow the day!  
 Smiled Hesperus the golden,  
 Who smileth soft for Venus gay!  
 While that horn'd glory holden  
 Brimful from the fount of fire,  
 The white moon, was leading higher  
 In a gentle pastoral wise  
 All the nightly deities!  
 Yea, and Titan threw abroad  
 The far shining of his hair  
 'Neath Thy footsteps holy-fair,  
 Owning Thee the Son of God;  
 The Mind artificer of all,  
 And his own fire's original!

And THOU upon Thy wing of will  
 Mounting,—Thy God-foot uptill  
 The neck of the blue firmament,—  
 Soaring, didst alight content  
 Where the spirit-spheres were singing,  
 And the fount of good was springing,  
 In the silent heaven!  
 Where Time is not with his tide  
 Ever running, never weary,  
 Drawing earth-born things aside  
 Against the rocks: nor yet are given  
 The plagues death-bold that ride the dreary  
 Tost matter-depths. Eternity  
 Assumes the places which they yield!  
 Not aged, howsoever she held  
 Her crown from everlastingly—  
 At once of youth, at once of eld,  
 While in that mansion which is hers  
 To God and gods she ministers!

How the poet rises in his 'singing  
 clothes' embroidered all over with the  
 mythos and the philosophy! Yet his  
 eye is to the Throne: and we must not  
 call him half a heathen by reason of a  
 Platonic idiosyncrasy, seeing that the  
*esoteric* of the most suspicious turnings  
 of his phraseology is 'Glory to the true  
 God.' For another ode Paris should be  
 here to choose it—we are puzzled among  
 the beautiful. Here is one with a  
 thought in it from Gregory's prose,  
 which belongs to Synesius by right of  
 conquest:—

O my deathless, O my blessed,  
 Maid-born, glorious son confessed,

O my Christ of Solyma!  
 I who earliest learnt to play  
 This measure for Thee, fain would bring  
 Its new sweet tune to cittern-string—  
 Be propitious, O my King!  
 Take this music which 'is mine,  
 Anthem'd from the songs divine!

We will sing Thee, deathless One,  
 God Himself, and God's great Son—  
 Of sire of endless generations,  
 Son of manifold creations!  
 Nature mutually endured,  
 Wisdom in infinitude!  
 God, before the angels burning—  
 Corpse, among the mortals mourning!  
 What time Thou wert pour'd mild  
 From an earthy vase defiled,  
 Magi with fair arts besprent,  
 At Thy new star's orient,  
 Trembled inly, wondered wild,  
 Questioned with their thoughts abroad—  
 'What then is the new-born child?  
 Who the hidden God?'  
 God, or corpse, or King?—  
 Bring your gifts, oh hither bring  
 Myrrh for rite—for tribute, gold—  
 Frankincense for sacrifice!  
 God! Thine incense take and hold!  
 King! I bring Thee gold of price!  
 Myrrh with tomb will harmonize!

For Thou, entombed, hast purified  
 Earthly ground and rolling tide,  
 And the path of daemon nations,  
 And the free air's fluctuations,  
 And the depth below the deep!  
 Thou God, helper of the dead,  
 Low as Hades didst Thou tread!  
 Thou King, gracious aspect keep!  
 Take this music which is mine,  
 Anthem'd from the songs divine.

Eudocia—in the twenty-first year of  
 the fifth century—wife of Theodosius,  
 and empress of the world, thought good  
 to extend her sceptre—

(Hac claritate gemina  
 O gloriosa foemina!)

over Homer's poems, and cento-ize them  
 into an epic on the Saviour's life. She  
 was the third fair woman accused of  
 sacrificing a world for an apple, having  
 moved her husband to wrath by giving  
 away his imperial gift of a large one to  
 her own philosophic friend Paulinus;  
 and being unhappily more learned than

her two predecessors in the sin, in the course of her exile to Jerusalem she took ghostly comfort by separating Homer's εἶδωλον from his φρένες. There she sat among the ruins of the holy city, addressing herself most unholy, with whatever good intentions and delicate fingers, to pulling Homer's gold to pieces bit by bit, even as the ladies of France devoted what remained to them of virtuous energy *pour parfiler* under the benignant gaze of Louis Quinze. She, too, who had no right of the purple to literary ineptitude—she, born no empress of Rome, but daughter of Leontius the Athenian, what had she to do with Homer, *parflant*? Was it not enough for Homer that he was turned once, like her own cast imperial mantle, by Apolinarius into a Jewish epic, but that he must be unpicked again by Eudocia for a Christian epic? The reader, who has heard enough of centos, will not care to hear how she did it. That she did it was too much; and the deed recoiled. For mark the poetical justice of her destiny; let all readers mark it; and all writers, especially female writers, who may be half as learned, and not half as fair—that although she wrote many poems, one *On the Persian War*, whose title and merit are recorded, not one, except this cento, has survived. The obliterative sponge we hear of in Aeschylus has washed out every verse except this cento's 'damned spot.' This remains. This is called Eudocia! this stands for the daughter of Leontius, and this only in the world! O fair mischief! she is punished by her hand.

And yet, are we born critics any more than she was born an empress, that we should not have a heart? and is our heart stone, that it should not wax soft within us while the vision is stirred 'between our eyelids and our eyes,' of this beautiful Athenais, baptized once by Christian waters, and once by human tears, into Eudocia, the imperial mourner!—this learned pupil of a learned father, crowned once by her golden hair, and once by her golden crown,

yet praised more for poetry and learning than for beauty and greatness by such grave writers as Socrates and Evagrius, the ecclesiastical historians?—this world's empress, pale with the purple of her palaces, an exile even on the throne from her Athens, and soon twice an exile, from father's grave and husband's bosom? We relent before such a vision. And what if, reluctantly, we declare her innocent of the Homeric cento?—what if we find her 'a whipping boy' to take the blame?—what if we write down a certain *Proba improba*, and bid her bear it! For Eudocia having been once a mark to slander may have been so again; and Falconia Proba having committed centism upon Virgil must have been capable of anything. The Homeric cento has been actually attributed to her by certain critics, with whom we would join in all earnestness our most sour voices, gladly, for Eudocia's sake, who is closely dear to us, and not malignly for Proba's, who was *improba* without our help. So shall we impute evil to only one woman, and she not an Athenian; while our worst wish, even to her, assumes this innoxious shape, that she had used a distaff rather than a stylus, though herself and the yet more 'Sleeping Beauty' had owned one horoscope between them! Amen to our wish! A busy distaff and a sound sleep to Proba!

And now that golden-haired, golden-crowned daughter of Leontius, for whom neither the much learning nor the much sorrow drove Hesperus from her sovran eyes—let her pass on unblenched. Be it said of her, softly as she goes, by all gentle readers—'She is innocent, whether for centos or for apples! She wrote only such Christian Greek poems as Christians and poets might rejoice to read, but which perished with her beauty, as being of one seed with it.'

Midway in the sixth century we encounter Paul Silentiarius, called so in virtue of the office held by him in the court of Justinian, and chiefly esteemed for his descriptive poem on the Byzantine

church of St. Sophia, which, after the Arian conflagration, was rebuilt gorgeously by the emperor. This church was not dedicated to a female saint, according to the supposition of many persons, but to the second person of the Trinity, the *ἀγία σοφία*—holy wisdom; while the poem being recited in the imperial presence, and the poet's gaze often forgetting to rise higher than the imperial smile, Paul Silentiarius dwelt less on the divine dedication and the spiritual uses of the place, than on the glory of the dedicatrix and the beauty of the structure. We hesitate, moreover, to grant to his poem the praise which has been freely granted to it by more capable critics, of its power to realize this beauty of structure to the eyes of the reader. It is highly elaborate and artistic; but the elaboration and art appear to us architectural far more than picturesque. There is no sequency, no congruity, no keeping, no light and shade. The description has reference to the working as well as to the work, to the materials as well as to the working. The eyes of the reader are suffered to approach the whole only in analysis, or rather in analysis analysed. Every part, part by part, is recounted to him excellently well—is brought close till he may touch it with his eyelashes; but when he seeks for the general effect it is in pieces—there is none of it. Byron shows him more in the passing words,

I have beheld Sophia's bright roofs swell  
Their glittering mass i' the sun,

than Silentiarius in all his poem. Yet the poem has abundant merit in diction and harmony; and besides higher noblenesses, the pauses are modulated with an artfulness not commonly attained by these later Greeks, and the ear exults in an unaccustomed rhythmic pomp which the inward critical sense is inclined to murmur at, as an expletive verbosity.

Whoever looketh with a mortal eye  
To heaven's emblazoned forms, not steadfastly

With unreverted neck can bear to measure  
That meadow-round of star-apparelled pleasure,  
But drops his eyelids to the verdant hill,  
Yearning to see the river run at will,  
With flowers on each side,—and the ripening corn,  
And grove thick set with trees, and flocks at morn  
Leaping against the dews,—and olives twined,  
And green vine-branches trailingly inclined,—  
And the blue calmness skimmed by dripping oar  
Along the Golden Horn.

But if he bring  
His foot across this threshold, never more  
Would he withdraw it; fain, with wandering  
Moist eyes, and ever-turning head, to stay,  
Since all satiety is driven away  
Beyond the noble structure. Such a fane  
Of blameless beauty hath our Caesar raised  
By God's perfective grace, and not in vain!  
O emperor, these labours we have praised,  
Draw down the glorious Christ's perpetual smile:  
For thou, the high-peaked Ossa didst not pile  
Upon Olympus' head, nor Pelion throw  
Upon the neck of Ossa, opening so  
The aether to the steps of mortals! no!  
Having achieved a work more high than hope,  
Thou dost not need these mountains as a slope  
Whereby to scale the heaven! Wings take thee thither  
From purest piety to highest aether.

The following passage, from the same 'Description,' is hard to turn into English, through the accumulative riches of the epithets. Greek words atone for their vainglorious redundancy by their beauty, but we cannot think so of these our own pebbles.

Who will unclothe me Homer's sounding lips,  
And sing the marble mead that oversweeps  
The mighty walls and pavements spread around  
Of this tall temple, which the sun has crowned?  
The hammer with its iron tooth was loosed  
Into Carystus' summit green, and bruised,  
The Phrygian shoulder of the daedal stone;—

This marble, coloured after roses fused  
In a white air, and that, with flowers thereon  
Both purple and silver, shining tenderly !  
And that which in the broad fair Nile sank  
low

The barges to their edge, the porphyry's  
glow  
Sown thick with little stars ! and thou mayst  
see

The green stone of Laconia glitter free !  
And all the Carian hill's deep bosom brings,  
Streaked bow-wise, with a livid white and  
red,—

And all the Lydian chasm keeps covered,—  
A hueless blossom with a ruddier one  
Soft mingled ! all, besides, the Libyan sun  
Warms with his golden splendour, till he  
make

A golden yellow glory for his sake,  
Along the roots of the Maurusian height !  
And all the Celtic mountains give to sight  
From crystal clefts : black marbles dappled  
fair

With milky distillations here and there !  
And all the onyx yields in metal-shine  
Of precious greenness !—all that land of  
thine,

Aetolia, hath on even plains engendered  
But not on mountain-tops,—a marble  
rendered

Here nigh to green, of tints which emeralds  
use,

Here with a sombre purple in the hues !  
Some marbles are like new-dropt snow, and  
some

Alight with blackness !—Beauty's rays have  
come,

So congregate, beneath this holy dome !

And thus the poet takes us away from  
the church and dashes our senses and  
admiration down these marble quarries !  
Yet it is right for us to admit the miracle  
of a poem made out of stones ! and when  
he spoke of unclosing Homer's lips on  
such a subject he was probably thinking  
of Homer's ships, and meant to intimate  
that one catalogue was as good for him  
as another.

John Geometra arose in no propitious  
orient probably with the seventh cen-  
tury, although the time of his 'elevation'  
appears to be uncertain within a hundred  
years.

He riseth slowly, as his sullen car  
Had all the weights of sleep and death hung  
on it.

Plato, refusing his divine fellowship  
to any one who was not a geometrician  
or who was a poet, might have kissed  
our Johannes, who was not divine, upon  
both cheeks, in virtue of his other name  
and in vice of his verses. He was the  
author of certain hymns to the Virgin  
Mary, as accumulative of epithets and  
admiration as ten of her litanies, in-  
clusive of a pious compliment, which,  
however geometrically exact in its pro-  
portions, sounds strangely.

Oh health to thee ! new living car of the sky,  
Afire on the wheels of four virtues at once !  
Oh health to thee ! Seat, than the cherubs  
more high,

More pure than the seraphs, *more broad  
than the thrones.*

Towards the close of the last hymn,  
the exhausted poet empties back some-  
thing of the ascription into his own lap  
by a remarkable *mihi quoque*.

Oh health to me, royal one ! if there belong  
Any grace to my singing, that grace is from  
thee.

Oh health to me, royal one ! if in my song  
Thou hast pleasure—oh, thine is the grace  
of the glee !

We may mark the time of George  
Pisida, about thirty years deep in the  
seventh century. He has been con-  
founded with the rhetorical Archbishop  
of Nicomedia, but held the office of  
scaevophylax, only lower than the high-  
est, in the metropolitan church of St.  
Sophia, and was a poet, singing half in  
the church and half in the court, and  
considerably nearer to the feet of the  
Emperor Heraclius than can please us  
in any measure. Hoping all things,  
however, in our poetical charity, we are  
willing to hope even this—that the man  
whom Heraclius carried about with him  
as a singing-man when he went to fight  
the Persians, and who sang and recited  
accordingly, and provided notes of ad-  
miration for all the imperial notes of  
interrogation, and gave his admiring  
poems the appropriate and suggestive  
name of *acroases*—auscultations, things  
intended to be heard,—might neverthe-  
less love Heraclius the fighting-man,

not slave-wise or flatterer-wise, but man-wise or dog-wise, in good truth, and up to the brim of his praise; and so hoping, we do not dash the praise down as a libation to the infernal task-masters. Still it is an impotent conclusion to a free-hearted poet's musing on the *Six Days' Work*, to wish God's creation under the sceptre of his particular friend! It looks as if the particular friend had an ear like Dionysius, and the poet—ah, the poet!—a mark as of a chain upon his brow in the shadow of his court laurel.

We shall not revive the question agitated among his contemporaries, whether Euripides or George Pisida wrote the best iambs; but that our George knew the secret of beauty, and that, having noble thoughts, he could utter them nobly, is clear, despite of Heraclius. That he is, besides, unequal; often coldly perplexed when he means to be ingenious, only violent when he seeks to be inspired; that he premeditates ecstasies, and is inclined to the attitudes of the orators; in brief, that he 'not only' and not seldom sleeps but *snores*—are facts as true of him as the praise is. His Hexæmeron, to which we referred as his chief work, is rather a meditation or rhythmical speech upon the finished creation, than a retrospection of the six days—and also there is more of Plato in it than of Moses. It has many fine things, and whole passages of no ordinary eloquence, though difficult to separate and select.

Whatever eyes seek God to view His Light,  
As far as they behold Him close in night!  
Whoever searcheth with insatiate balls  
Th' abyssal glare, or gazeth on Heaven's walls

Against the fire-disk of the sun, the same  
According to the vision he may claim,  
Is dazzled from his sense. What soul of flame

Is called sufficient to view onward thus  
The way whereby the sun's light came to us?

O distant Presence in fixed motion! Known  
To all men, and inscrutable to one:  
Perceived—uncomprehended! unexplained  
To all the spirits, yet by each attained,

Because its God-sight is Thy work! O Presence,

Whatever holy greatness of Thine essence  
Lie virtue-hidden—Thou hast given our eyes  
The vision of Thy plastic energies;—  
Not shown in angels only (those create  
All fiery-hearted, in a mystic state  
Of bodiless body), but, if order be  
Of natures more sublime than they or we,  
In highest Heaven, or mediate æther, or  
This world now seen, or one that came before  
Or one to come—quick in Thy purpose—  
there!

Working in fire and water, earth and air—  
In every tuneful star, and tree, and bird—  
In all the swimming, creeping life unheard,  
In all green herbs, and chief of all, in MAN.

There are other poems of inferior length, *On the Persian War*, in three books, or, alas, 'auscultations'—*The Heracleiad*, again on the Persian war, and in two (of course) auscultations again,—*Against Severus*, *On the Vanity of Life*, *The War of the Huns*, and others. From the *Vanity of Life*, which has much beauty and force, we shall take a last specimen:—

Some yearn to rule the state, to sit above,  
And touch the cares of hate as near as love—  
Some their own reason for tribunal take,  
And for all thrones the humblest prayers  
they make!

Some love the orator's vainglorious art,—  
The wise love silence and the hush of heart,—

Some to ambition's spirit-curse are fain,  
That golden apple with a bloody stain;  
While some do battle in her face (more rife  
Of noble ends) and conquer strife with strife!  
And while your groaning tables gladden  
these,

Satiety's quick chariot to disease,  
Hunger the wise man helps, to water, bread,  
And light wings to the dreams about his head.

The truth becomes presently obvious,  
that—

The sage o'er all the world his sceptre waves,  
And earth is common ground to thrones  
and graves.

John Damascenus, to whom we should  
not give by any private impulse of  
admiration the title of Chrysorrhœas

accorded to him by his times, lived at Damascus, his native city, early in the eighth century, holding an unsheathed sword of controversy until the point drew down the lightning. He retired before the affront rather than the injury; and in company with his beloved friend and fellow poet, Cosmas of Jerusalem (whose poetical remains the writer of these remarks has vainly sought the sight of, and therefore can only, as by hearsay, ascribe some value to them), hid the remnant of his life in the monastery of Saba, where Phocas of the twelfth century looked upon the tomb of either poet. John Damascenus wrote several acrostics on the chief festivals of the churches, which are not much better, although very much longer, than acrostics need be. When he writes out of his heart, without looking to the first letters of his verses—as, indeed, in his anacreontic his eyes are too dim for iota hunting—he is another man, and almost a strong man; for the heart being sufficient to speak we want no Delphic oracle—‘Pan is NOT dead.’ In our selection from the anacreontic hymn the tears seem to trickle audibly—we welcome them as a Castalia, or, rather, ‘as Siloa’s brook,’ flowing by an oracle more divine than any Grecian one:—

From my lips in their defilement,  
From my heart in its beguilement,  
From my tongue which speaks not fair,  
From my soul stained everywhere,  
O my Jesus, take my prayer!

Spurn me not for all it says,  
Not for words and not for ways,—  
Not for shamelessness endured!  
Make me brave to speak my mood,  
O my Jesus, as I would!  
Or teach me, which I rather seek,  
What to do and what to speak.

I have sinned more than she,  
Who learning where to meet with Thee,  
And bringing myrrh, the highest priced,  
Anointed bravely, from her knee,  
Thy blessed feet accordingly—  
My God, my Lord, my Christ!—  
As Thou saidest not ‘Depart’  
To that suppliant from her heart,  
Scorn me not, O Word, that art

The gentlest one of all words said!  
But give Thy feet to me instead  
That tenderly I may them kiss  
And clasp them close, and never miss  
With over-dropping tears, as free  
And precious as that myrrh could be,  
T’ anoint them bravely from my knee!

Wash me with Thy tears: draw nigh me,  
That their salt may purify me:  
THOU remit my sins who knowest  
All the sinning, to the lowest—  
Knowest all my wounds, and seest  
All the stripes Thyself decreest;  
Yea, but knowest all my faith,  
Seest all my force to death,—  
Hearest all my wailings low,  
That mine evil should be so!  
Nothing hidden but appears  
In Thy knowledge, O Divine,  
O Creator, Saviour mine—  
Not a drop of falling tears,  
Not a breath of inward moan,  
Not a heart-beat . . . which is gone!—

After this deep pathos of Christianity we dare not say a word—we dare not even praise it as poetry: our heart is stirred, and not ‘idly.’ The only sound which can fitly succeed the cry of the contrite soul is that of Divine condonation or of angelic rejoicing. Let us who are sorrowful still, be silent too.

#### IV

ALTHOUGH doubts, as broad as four hundred years, separate the earliest and latest period talked of as the age of Simeon Metaphrastes by those *virilustrissimi* the classical critics, we may set him down, without much peril to himself or us, at the close of the tenth century, or very early in the eleventh. He is chiefly known for his *Lives of the Saints*, which have been lifted up as a mark both for honour and dishonour; which Psellus hints at as a favourite literature of the angels, which Leo Allatius exalts as chafing the temper of the heretics, and respecting which we, in an exemplary serenity, shall straightway accede to one-half of the opinion of Bellarmine—that the work speaketh not as things actually happened, but as

they might have happened—*'non ut res gestae fuerant, sed ut geri potuerant.'* Our half of this weighty opinion is the first clause—we demur upon *'ut geri potuerant,'*—and we need not go further than the former to win a light of commentary for the term *'metaphrases,'* applied to the saintly biographies in otherwise a doubtful sense, and worn obliquely upon the sleeve of the biographer Metaphrastes, in no doubtful token of his skill in metamorphosing things as they were into things as they might have been. And Simeon having received from Constantinople the honour of his birth within her walls, and returning to her the better honour of the distinctions and usefulness of his life,—so writeth Psellus, his encomiast, with a graceful turn of thought,—expired in an *'odour of sanctity,'* befitting the biographer of all the saints—breathing out from his breathless remains such an incense of celestial sweetness, that if it had not been for the maladroitness of certain unfragrant persons whose desecration of the next tomb acted instantly as a stopper, the whole earth might at this day be *metaphrased* to our nostrils, as steeped in an attar-gul of Eden or Ede!—we might be dwelling in a phoenix nest at this day. Through the maladroitness, however, in question, there is lost to us every sweeter influence from the life and death of Simeon Metaphrastes than may result from the lives and deaths of his saints, and from other works of his, whether commentaries, orations, or poems; and we cannot add that the aroma from his writings bears any proportion in value to the fragrance from his sepulchre. Little of his poetry has reached us, and we are satisfied with the limit. There were three Simeons, who did precede our Simeon, as the world knoweth, and whose titles were Stylitae or Columnarii, because it pleased them in their saintly volition to take the highest place and live out their natural lives supernaturally, each upon the top of a column. Peradventure the columns which our Simeon refused to live upon conspired

against his poetry: peradventure it is on their account that we find ourselves between two alphabetic acrostics, written solemnly by his hand, and take up one wherein every alternate line begins with a letter of the alphabet; its companion in the couplet being left to run behind it, out of livery and sometimes out of breath. Will the public care to look upon such a curiosity? Will our verse-writers care to understand what harm may be done by a conspiracy of columns—gods and men quite on one side? And will candid readers care to confess at last, that there is an earnestness in the poem, acrostic as it is—a leaning to beauty's side—which is above the acrosticism? Let us try:—

Ah, tears upon mine eyelids, sorrow on mine heart!  
I bring Thee soul-repentance, Creator as Thou art.  
Bounding joyous actions, deep as arrows go—  
Pleasures self-revolving, issue into woe  
Creatures of our mortal, headlong rush to sin—  
I have seen them;—of them—ah me,—I have been!  
Duly pitying Spirits, from your spirit-frame,  
Bring your cloud of weeping,—worthy of the same!  
Else I would be bolder—If that light of Thine,  
Jesus, quell the evil, let it on me shine.  
Fail me truth, is living, less than death forlorn,  
When the sinner readeth—'better be unborn'?  
God, I raise toward Thee both eyes of my heart,  
With a sharp cry—'Help me!'—while mine hopes depart.  
Help me! Death is bitter, all hearts comprehend;  
But I fear beyond it—end beyond the end!  
Inwardly behold me, how my soul is black—  
Sympathize in gazing, do not spurn me back!  
Knowing that Thy pleasure is not to destroy,  
That Thou fain wouldst save me—this is all my joy.  
Lo, the lion, hunting spirits in their deep,  
(Stand beside me!) roareth—(help me!) nears to leap.

Mayst Thou help me, Master! Thou art  
pure alone—

Thou alone art sinless—one Christ on  
a throne.

Nightly deeds I loved them—hated day's  
instead—

Hence this soul-involving darkness on  
mine head!

O Word, who constrainest things estranged  
and curst,

If Thy hand can save me, that work were  
the first!

Pensive o'er my sinning, counting all its  
ways,

Terrors shake me, waiting adequate dis-  
may.

Quenchless glories many, hast Thou—  
many a rod—

Thou, too, hast Thy measures—Can I  
bear Thee, God?

Rend away my counting from my soul's  
decline,

Show me of the portion of those saved of  
Thine!

Slow drops of my weeping to Thy mercy  
run—

Let its rivers wash me, by that mercy  
won.

Tell me what is worthy, in our dreary  
now,

As the future glory? (madness!) what,  
as THOU?

Union, oh, vouchsafe me to Thy fold be-  
neath,

Lest the wolf across me gnash his gory  
teeth!

View me, judge me gently! spare me,  
Master bland,—

Brightly lift Thine eyelids, kindly stretch  
Thine hand!

Winged and choral angels! 'twixt my  
spirit lone,

And all deathly visions, interpose your  
own!

Yea, my Soul, remember death and woe  
inwrought—

After-death affliction, wringing earth's to  
nought.

Zone me, Lord, with graces! Be founda-  
tions built

Underneath me; save me! as Thou  
know'st and wilt!

The omission of our X (in any case  
too sullen a letter to be employed in  
the service of an acrostic) has permitted  
us to write line for line with the Greek;  
and we are able to infer, to the honour

of the Greek poet, that, although he did  
not live upon a column, he was not far  
below one, in the virtue of self-morti-  
fication. We are tempted to accord  
him some more gracious and serious  
justice, by breaking away a passage  
from his *Planctus Mariae*, the lament of  
Mary on embracing the Lord's body;  
and giving a moment's insight into  
a remarkable composition, which, how-  
ever deprived of its poetical right of  
measure, is, in fact, nearer to a poem,  
both in purpose and achievement, than  
any versified matter we have looked  
upon from this metaphrastic hand:—

'O uncovered corse, yet Word of the  
Living One! self-doomed to be uplifted  
on the cross for the drawing of all men  
unto Thee, — what member of Thine  
hath no wound? O my blessed brows,  
embraced by the thorn-wreath which is  
pricking at my heart! O beautiful and  
priestly One, who hadst not where to  
lay Thine head and rest, and now wilt  
lay it only in the tomb, resting *there*—  
sleeping, as Jacob said, a lion's sleep!  
O cheeks turned to the smiter! O lips,  
new hive for bees, yet fresh from the  
sharpness of vinegar and bitterness of  
gall! O mouth, wherein was no guile,  
yet betrayed by the traitor's kiss!  
O hand, creative of man, yet nailed to  
the cross, and since, stretched out unto  
Hades, with help for the first trans-  
gressor! O feet, once walking on the  
deep to hallow the waters of nature!  
O me, my son! . . . Where is thy  
chorus of sick ones?—those whom Thou  
didst cure of their diseases, and bring  
back from the dead? Is none here, but  
only Nicodemus, to draw the nails from  
those hands and feet?—none here, but  
only Nicodemus, to lift Thee from the  
cross, heavily, heavily, and lay Thee in  
these mother-arms, which bore Thee  
long ago, in Thy babyhood, and were  
glad *then*? These hands, which swaddled  
Thee then, let them bind Thy grave-  
clothes now. And yet,—O bitter  
funerals!—O Giver of life from the  
dead, liest Thou dead before mine eyes?  
Must I, who said "hush" beside Thy  
cradle, wail this passion upon Thy

grave? I, who washed Thee in Thy first bath, must I drop on Thee these hotter tears? I, who raised Thee high in my maternal arms,—but *then* Thou leapedst,—*then* Thou springedst up in Thy child-play. . . .’

It is better to write so than to stand upon a column. And, although the passage does, both generally and specifically, in certain of its ideas, recall the antithetic eloquence of that Gregory Nazianzen before whom this Simeon must be dumb, we have touched his ‘oration’ so called, nearer than our subject could permit us to do any of Gregory’s, because the *Planctus* involves an imagined situation, is poetical in its design. Moreover, we must prepare to look downwards; the poets were descending from the gorgeous majesty of the hexameter and the severe simplicity of iambics, down through the mediate *versus politici*, a loose metre; adapted to the popular ear, to the lowest deep of a ‘measured prose,’—which has been likened (but which *we* will not liken) to the blank verse of our times. Presently we may offer an example from Psellus of a prose acrostic—the reader being delighted with the prospect! ‘A whole silver threepence, mistress.’

Michael Psellus lived midway in the eleventh century, and appears to have been a man of much aspiration towards the higher places of the earth. A senator of no ordinary influence, preceptor of the Emperor Michael previous to that accession, he is supposed to have included in his instructions the advantages of sovereignty, and in his precepts the most subtle means of securing them. We were about to add that his acquirements as a scholar were scarcely less imperial than those of his pupil as a prince; but the expression might have been inappropriate. There are cases not infrequent—not entirely opposite to the present case, and worthy always of all meditation by such intelligent men as affect extensive acquisition—when acquirements are not ruled by the man, but rule him. Whatever

originates from the mind cannot obstruct her individual faculty; nay, whatever she receives inwardly and marks her power over by creating out of it a *tertium quid*, according to the law of the perpetual generation of spiritual verities, is not obstructive but impulsive to the evolution of faculty; but the erudition, whether it be erudition as the world showed it formerly, or miscellaneous literature, as the world shows it now, the accumulated acquirement of whatever character, which remains *extraneous* to the mind, is and must be in the same degree an obstruction and deformity. How many are there from Psellus to Bayle, bound hand and foot intellectually with the rolls of their own papyrus—men whose erudition has grown stronger than their souls! How many whom we would gladly see washed in the clean waters of a little ignorance, and take our own part in their refreshment! Not that knowledge is bad, but that wisdom is better; and that it is better and wiser in the sight of the angels of knowledge to think out one true thought with a thrush’s song and a green light for all lexicon—or to think it without the light and without the song, because truth is beautiful, where they are not seen or heard—than to mummy our benumbed souls with the circumvolutions of twenty thousand books. And so Michael Psellus was a learned man.

We have sought earnestly, yet in vain—and the fact may account for our ill-humour—a sight of certain iambics upon vices and virtues, and Tantalus and Sphinx, which are attributed to this writer, and cannot be in the moon after all: earnestly, yet with no fairer encouragement to our desire than what befalls it from his *poems* (!) *On the Councils*, the first of which, and only the first, through the softness of our charities, we bring to confront the reader:—

Know the holy councils, King, to their utmost number,  
Such as roused the impious ones from their world-wide slumber!

Seven in all those councils were—Nice the first containing,  
 When the godly master-soul Constantine was reigning,  
 What time at Byzantium, hallowed with the hyssop,  
 In heart and word, Metrophanes presided as archbishop!  
 It cut away Arius' tongue's maniacal delusion,  
 Which cut off from the Trinity the blessed Homousion—  
 Blasphemed (O miserable man!) the maker of the creature,  
 And low beneath the Father cast the equal Filial nature.

The prose acrostic, contained in an office written by Psellus to the honour of Simeon, is elaborated on the words 'I sing thee who didst write the metaphrases'; every sentence being insulated, and beginning with a charmed letter.

Say in a dance how we shall go,  
 Who never could a measure know?

why thus—(and yet Psellus, who did *know* everything, wrote a synopsis of the metres!)—why thus:—

'Inspire me, Word of God, with a rhythmic chant, for I am borne onward to praise Simeon Metaphrastes, and Logothetes, as he is fitly called, the man worthy of admiration.

'Solemnly from the heavenly heights did the Blessed Ghost descend on thee, wise one, and finding thine heart pure, rested there, there verily in the body!'

Surely we need not write any more. But Michael Psellus was a very learned man.

John of Euchaita, or Euchapia, or Theodoropolis—the three names do appear through the twilight to belong to one city—was a bishop, probably contemporary with Psellus—is only a poet now. We turn to see the voice which speaks to us. It is a voice with a soul in it, clear and sweet and living; and we who have walked long in the desert, leap up to its sound as to the dim flowing of a stream, and would take a deep breath by its side both for the weariness which is gone and the repose which is coming. But it is a rarer

thing than a stream in the desert: it is a voice in the desert—the only voice of a city. The city may have three names, as we have said, or the three names may more fitly appertain to three cities—scholars knit their brows and wax doubtful as they talk; but a city denuded of its multitudes it surely is, ruined even of its ruins it surely is: no exhalation arises from its tombs—the foxes have lost their way to it—the bittern's cry is as dumb as the vanished population—only the Voice remains. John Mauropus, of Euchaita, Euchania, Theodoropolis! one living man among many dead, as the Arabian talc goes of the city of enchantment!—one speechful voice among the silent, sole survivor of the breath which maketh words, effluence of the soul replacing the bittern's cry—speak to us! And thou shalt be to us as a poet—we will salute thee by that high name. For have we not stood face to face with Michael Psellus and him of the metaphrases? Surely as a poet may we salute thee!

His poetry has, as if in contrast to the scenery of circumstances in which we find it, or to the fatality of circumstances in which it has *not* been found (and even Mr. Clarke in his learned work upon Sacred Literature, which is, however, incommunicative generally upon sacred poetry, appears unconscious of his being and his bishopric)—his poetry has a character singularly vital, fresh, and serene. There is nothing in it of the rapture of inspiration, little of the operativeness of art—nothing of imagination in a high sense, or of ear-service in any: he is not, he says, of those—

Who rain hard with redundancies of words,  
 And thunder and lighten out of eloquence.

His Greek being opposed to that of the Silentiarii and the Pisidae by a peculiar simplicity and ease of collocation which the reader feels lightly in a moment, the thoughts move through its transparency with a certain calm nobleness and sweet living earnestness, with holy upturned eyes and human tears beneath

the lids, till the reader feels lovingly too. We startle him from his reverie with an octave note on a favourite literary fashion of the living London, drawn from the voice of the lost city; discovering by that sound the first serial illustrator of pictures by poems, in the person of our Johannes. Here is a specimen from an annual of Euchaita, or Euchaia, or Theodoropolis—we may say 'annual' although the pictures were certainly not in a book, but were probably ornaments of the beautiful temple in the midst of the city, concerning which there is a tradition. Here is a specimen selected for love's sake, because it 'illustrates' a portrait of Gregory Nazianzen:—

What meditates thy thoughtful gaze, my father?

To tell me some new truth? Thou canst not so!

For all that mortal hands are weak to gather  
Thy blessed books unfolded long ago.

These are striking verses, upon the Blessed among women, weeping:—

O Lady of the passion, dost thou weep?

What help can we then through our tears survey,

If such as thou a cause for wailing keep?

What help, what hope, for us, sweet Lady, say?

'Good man, it doth befit thine heart to lay  
More courage next it, having seen me so.

All other hearts find other balm to-day—  
*The whole world's consolation is my woe!*

Would any hear what can be said of  
a Transfiguration before Raffael's:—

Tremble, spectator, at the vision won thee—  
Stand afar off, look downward from the height,—

Lest Christ too nearly seen should lighten  
on thee,

And from thy fleshly eyeballs strike the sight,  
As Paul fell ruined by that glory white,—

Lo, the disciples prostrate, each apart,

Each impotent to bear the lamping light!

And all that Moses and Elias might,  
The darkness caught the grace upon her heart

And gave them strength for! *Thou*, if ever more

A God-voice pierce thy dark,—rejoice,  
adore!

Our poet was as unwilling a bishop as the most sturdy of the *volentes*; and there are poems written both in depreciation of, and in retrospective regret for, the ordaining dignity, marked by noble and holy beauties which we are unwilling to pass without extraction. Still we are constrained for space, and must come at last to his chief individual characteristic—to the gentle humanities which, strange to say, preponderate in the solitary voice—to the familiar smiles and sighs which go up and down in it to our ear. We will take the poem *To his Old House*, and see how the house survives by his good help, when the sun shines no more on the golden statue of Constantine:—

Oh, be not angry with me, gentle house,  
That I have left thee empty and deserted!  
Since thou thyself that evil didst arouse,  
In being to thy masters so false-hearted—  
In loving none of those who did possess thee—

In ministr'ing to no one to an end—

In no one's service caring to confess thee,  
But loving still the change of friend for friend,

And sending the last, plague-wise, to the door!

And so, or ere thou canst betray and leave me,

I, a wise lord, dismiss thee, servitor,  
And antedate the wrong thou mayst achieve me

Against my will, by what my will allows,  
Yet not without some sorrow, gentle house!

For oh, beloved house! what time I render  
My last look back on thee I grow more tender!

Pleasant possession, hearth for father's age,  
Dear gift of buried hands, sole heritage!

My blood is stirred—and love, that learnt its play

From all sweet customs, moves mine heart thy way!

For thou wert all my nurse and helpful creature—

For thou wert all my tutor and my teacher—  
In thee through lengthening toils I struggled deep—

In thee I watched all night without its sleep—  
In thee I worked the wearier daytime out,

Exalting truth, or trying by a doubt.

And oh, my father's roof! the memory leaves  
Such pangs as break mine heart, beloved  
eaves;

But God's word conquers all! . . .

He is forced to a strange land, reverting  
with this benediction to the 'dearest  
house':—

Farewell, farewell, mine own familiar one,  
Estranged for evermore from this day's sun,  
Fare-thee-well so! Farewell, O second  
mother,

O nurse and help,—remains there not another!

My bringing-up to some sublimer measure  
Of holy childhood and perfected pleasure!  
Now other spirits must thou tend and teach,  
And minister thy quiet unto each,  
For reasoning uses, if they love such use,  
But nevermore to me! God keep thee, house,  
God keep thee, faithful corner, where I drew  
So calm a breath of life! And God keep you,  
Kind neighbours! Though I leave you by  
His grace,

Let no grief bring a shadow to your face,  
Because whate'er He willeth to be done  
His will makes easy, makes the distant one,  
And soon brings all embraced before His  
throne!

We pass Philip Solitarius, who lived  
at the close of this eleventh century,  
even as we have passed one or two  
besides of his fellow poets: because they,  
having hidden themselves beyond the  
reach of our eyes and the endeavour of  
our hands, and we being careful to  
speak by knowledge rather than by  
testimony, nothing remains to us but  
this same silent passing—this regretful  
one, as our care to do better must  
testify—albeit our fancy will not, by any  
means, account them, with all their  
advantages of absence, 'the best part of  
the solemnity.'

Early in the twelfth century we are  
called to the recognition of Theodore  
Prodromus, the theologian, philosopher,  
and poet. His poems are unequal, consisting  
principally of a series of  
tetrastichs—Greek epigrams for lack of  
point, French epigrams for lack of  
poetry—upon the Old and New Testaments,  
and the Life of Chrysostom,—  
all nearly as bare of the rags of literary  
merit as might be expected from the

design; and three didactic poems upon  
Love, Providence, and against Bareus  
the heretic, into which the poet has cast  
the recollected life of his soul. The  
soul departs herself as a soul should,  
with a vivacity and energy which work  
outward and upward into eloquence.  
The sentiments are lofty, the expression  
free; there is an instinct to a middle  
and an end. Music we miss, even to  
the elementary melody: the poet thinks  
his thoughts, and speaks them; not  
indeed what all poets, so called, do  
esteem a necessary effort, and indeed  
what we should thank him for doing;  
but he *sings* them in nowise, and they  
are not of that divine order which are  
crowned by right of their divinity with  
an inseparable aureole of sweet sound.  
His poem upon Love—*φιλία* says the  
Greek word, but friendship does not  
answer to it—is a dialogue between the  
personification and a stranger. It opens  
thus dramatically, the stranger speaking:—

Love! Lady diademed with honour, whence  
And whither goest thou? Thy look presents  
Tears to the lid—thy mien is vext and low—  
Thy locks fall wildly from thy drooping  
brow—

Thy blushes are all pale—thy garb is fit  
For mourning in, and shoon and zone are  
loose!

So changed thou art to sadness every whit,  
And all that pomp and purple thou didst use,  
That seemly sweet—that new rose on the  
mouth—

Those fair-smoothed tresses, and that graceful  
zone,

Bright sandals, and the rest thou haddest on,  
Are all departed, gone to nought together!  
And now thou walkest mournful in the train  
Of mourning women!—where and whence,  
again?

Love. From earth to God my Father.  
Stranger. Dost thou say  
That earth of Love is desolated?

Love. Yea!

It so much scorned me.

Stranger. Scorned?

Love. And cast me out

From its door.

Stranger. From its door?

Love. As if without  
I had my lot to die!

Love consents to give her confidence to the wondering stranger; whereupon, as they sit in the shadow of a tall pine, she tells a Platonic story of all the good she had done in heaven before the stars, and the angels, and the throned Triad, and of all her subsequent sufferings on the melancholy and ungrateful earth. The poem, which includes much beauty, ends with a quaint sweetness in the troth-plighting of the stranger and the lady. Mayst thou have been faithful to that oath, O Theodora Prodrōmus! but thou didst swear 'too much to be believed—so much.'

The poems *On Providence* and *Against Boreas* exceed the *Love*, perhaps, in power and eloquence to the full measure of the degree in which they fall short of the interest of the latter's design. Whereupon we dedicate the following selection from the *Providence* to Mr. Carlyle's 'gigmen' and all 'respectable persons':—

Ah me! what tears mine eyes are welling forth,  
To witness in this synagogue of earth  
Wise men speak wisely while the scoffers sing,  
And rich men folly, for much honouring!  
Melitus trifles,—Socrates decrees  
Our further knowledge! Death to Socrates,  
And long life to Melitus!

Chiefton of evil, gold! blind child of clay,  
Gnawing with fixed tooth earth's heart away!  
Go! perish from us! oburgation vain  
To soulless nature, powerless to contain  
One ill unthrust upon it! Rather perish  
That turpitude of crowds, by which they cherish

Bad men for their good fortune, or condemn,  
Because of evil fortune, virtuous men!

Oh, for a trumpet-mouth! an iron tongue  
Sufficient for all speech! foundations hung  
High on Parnassus' top to bear my feet—  
So from that watch-tower, words which  
shall be meet,

I may out-thunder to the nations near me—  
'Ye worshippers of gold, poor rich men,  
hear me!

Where do ye wander?—for what object stand?

That gold is earth's ye carry in your hand,

And floweth earthward! bad men have its curse

The most profusely: would yourselves be worse

So to be richer?—better in your purse?

Your royal purple—'twas a dog that found it!

Your pearl of price—a sickened oyster owned it!

Your glittering gems are pebbles, dust—astray—

Your palace pomp was wrought of wood and clay,

Smoothed rock and moulded plinth! earth's clay! earth's wood!

Earth's common-hearted stones! Is this your mood,

To honour earth, to worship earth... nor blush?—

What dost thou murmur, savage mouth? Hush, hush!

Thy wrath is vainly breathed. The depth to tread

Of God's deep judgements, was not Paul's, he said.

The 'savage mouth' speaks in power, with whatever harshness: and we are tempted to contrast with this vehement utterance another short poem by the same poet, a little quaint withal, but light, soft, almost tuneful—as written for a *Book of Beauty*, and that not of Euchaïta! The subject is *Life*.

Oh, take me, thou mortal, . . . thy LIFE for thy praiser!

Thou hast met, found, and seized me, and know'st what my ways are.

Nor leave me for slackness, nor yield me for pleasure,

Nor look up too saintly, nor muse beyond measure!

There's the veil from my head—see the worst of my mourning!

There are wheels to my feet—have a dread of their turning!

There are wings round my waist—I may flatter and flee thee!

There are yokes on my hands—fear the chains I decree thee!

Hold me! hold a shadow, the winds as they quiver;

Hold me! hold a dream, smoke, a track on the river.

Oh, take me, thou mortal, . . . thy Life for thy praiser,

Thou hast met not and seized not—nor know'st what my ways are!

Nay, frown not, and shrink not—nor call  
me an aspen;  
There's the veil from my head! I have  
dropped from thy clasp! I  
A fall-back within it I soon may afford  
thee;  
There are wheels to my feet—I may roll  
back toward thee—  
There are wings round my waist—I may  
flee back and clip thee—  
There are yokes on my hands—I may *soon*  
cease to whip thee!  
Take courage! I rather would hearten than  
hip thee!

John Tzetza divides the twelfth century with his name, which is not a great one. In addition to an iambic fragment upon education, he has written indefatigably in the metre *politicus*, what must be read, if read at all, with a corresponding energy,—thirteen 'Chiliads,' of *variae historiae*, so called after Aelian's—Aelian's without the 'honey-tongue,'—very various histories indeed, about crocodiles and flies, and Plato's philosophy and Cleopatra's nails, and Samson and Phidias, and the resurrection from the dead, and the Calydonian boar—'everything under the sun' being, in fact, their imperfect epitome. The omission is simply *POETRY*! there is no apparent consciousness of her entity in the mind of this versifier; no aspiration towards her presence, not so much as a sigh upon her absence. We do not, indeed, become aware, in the whole course of this laborious work, of much unfolding of faculty; take it lower than the poetical; of nothing much beyond an occasional dry, sly, somewhat boorish humour, which being good humour besides, would not be a bad thing were its traces only more extended. But the general level of the work is a dull talkativeness, a prosy adversity, who is no 'Daughter of Jove,' and a slumberousness without a dream. We adjudge to our reader the instructive history of the Phoenix.

A phoenix is a single bird and synchronous with nature,  
The peacock cannot equal him in beauty or  
in stature!

In radiance he outshines the gold; the  
world in wonder yieldeth;  
His nest he fixeth in the trees, and all of  
spices buildeth.  
And when he dies, a little worm, from out  
his body twining,  
Doth generate him back again when'er  
the sun is shining;  
He lives in Aegypt, and he dies in Aethiopia  
only, as  
Asserts Philostratus, who wrote the Life of  
Apollonius.  
And as the wise Aegyptian scribe, the holy  
scribe Choeremon,  
Hath entered on these Institutes, all centre  
their esteem on,  
Seven thousand years and six of age, this  
phoenix of the story,  
Expireth from the fair Nile side, whereby  
he had his glory!

In the early part of the fourteenth century, Manuel Phile, pricked emulously to the heart by the successful labours of Tzetza, embraced into identity with himself the remaining half of Aelian, and developed in his poetical treatise *On the Properties of Animals*, to which Isachimus Camerarius provided a conclusion—the Natural History of that industrious and amusing Greek-Roman. The Natural History is translated into verse, but by no means glorified; and yet the poet of animals, Phile, has carried away far more of the Aelian honey clinging to the edges of his *patera* than the poet of the Chiliads did *ever* wot of. What we find in him is not beauty, what we hear in him is not music, but there is an open feeling for the beautiful which stirs at a word, and we have a scarcely confessed contentment in hearkening to those twice-told stories of birds and beasts and fishes, measured out to us in the low monotony of his chanting voice. Our selections shall say nothing of the live grasshopper, called, with the first breath of these papers, an emblem of the vital Greek tongue; because the space left to us closes within our sight, and the science of the age does not thirst to receive, through our hands, the history of grasshoppers, according to Aelian or Phile either. Everybody knows what Phile tells us here, that grasshoppers

live upon morning dew, and cannot sing when it is dry. Everybody knows that the lady grasshopper sings not at all. And if the moral, drawn by Phile from this latter fact, of the advantage of silence in the female sex generally, be true and important, it is also too obvious to exact our enforcement of it. Therefore we pass by the grasshopper, and the night-ingle too, for all her fantastic song, and hasten to introduce to European naturalists a Philhellenic species of *heron*, which has escaped the researches of Cuvier, and the peculiarities of which may account to the philosophic reader for that instinct of the 'wisdom of our forefathers,' which established an English university in approximation with the fens. It is earnestly to be hoped that the nice ear in question for the Attic dialect may still be preserved among the herons of Cambridgeshire.

A Grecian island nourisheth to bless  
A race of herons in all nobleness.  
If some barbarian bark approach the shore,  
They hate, they flee,—no eagle can out-  
soar!

But if by chance an Attic voice be wist,  
They grow softhearted straight, phil-  
hellenist;

Press on in earnest flocks along the strand,  
And stretch their wings out to the comer's  
hand.

Perhaps he nears them with a gentle mind,—  
They love his love, though foreign to their  
kind!

For so the island giveth wingèd teachers,  
In true love lessons, to all wingless creatures.

He has written, besides, *A Dialogue between Mind and Phile*, and other poems; and we cannot part without taking from him a more solemn tone, which may sound as an 'Amen!' to the good we have said of him. The following address to the Holy Spirit is concentrated in expression:—

O living Spirit, O falling of God-dew,  
O Grace which dost console us and renew;  
O vital light, O breath of angelhood,  
O generous ministration or things good—  
Creator of the visible, and best  
Upholder of the great unmanifest  
Power infinitely wise, new boon sublime,

Of science and of art, constraining might;  
In whom I breathe, live, speak, rejoice, and  
write,

Be with us in all places, for all time!

'And now,' saith the patientest reader of all, 'you have done. Now we have watched out the whole night of the world with you, by no better light than these poetical rushlights, and the wicks fail, and the clock of the universal hour is near upon the stroke of the seventeenth century, and you have surely done!' Surely *not*, we answer; for we see a hand which the reader sees not, which beckons us over to Crete, and clasps within its shadowy fingers a roll of hymns anacreontical, written by Maximus Margunius! and not for the last of our readers would we lose this last of the Greeks, owing him salutation. Yet the hymns have, for the true anacreontic fragrance, a musty odour, and we have scant praise for them in our nostrils. Their inspiration is from Gregory Nazianzen, whose *Soul and Body* are renewed in them by a double species of transmigration; and although we kiss the feet of Gregory's high excellences, we cannot admit any one of them to be a safe conductor of poetical inspiration. And in union with Margunius's plagiaristic tendencies there is a wearisome lengthiness, harder to bear. He will knit you to the whole length of an *Honi soit qui mal y pense*, till you fall asleep to the humming of the stitches what time you should be reading the 'moral.' We ourselves once dropped into a 'distraction,' as the French say,—for nothing could be more different from what the English say, than our serene state of self-abnegation—at the beginning of a house-building by this Maximus Margunius: when, reading on some hundred lines with our bare bodily eyes, and our soul starting up on a sudden to demand a measure of the progress, behold, he was building it still, with a trowel in the same hand: it was not forwarder by a brick. The swallows had time to hatch two nestfuls in a chimney while he finished the chimney-pot! Nevertheless he has moments of earnestness, and

they leave beauties in their trace. Let us listen to this extract from his fifth hymn :—

Take me as a hermit lone  
With a desert life and moan ;  
Only Thou anear to mete  
Slow or quick my pulse's beat ;  
Only Thou, the night to chase  
With the sunlight in Thy face !  
Pleasure to the eyes may come  
From a glory seen afar,  
But if life concentre gloom  
Scattered by no little star,  
Then, how feeble, God, we are !  
Nay, whatever bird there be,  
(Æther by his flying stirred,)  
He, in this thing, must be free—  
And I, Saviour, am Thy bird,  
Pricking with an open beak  
At the words that Thou dost speak  
Leave a breath upon my wings,  
That above these nether things  
I may rise to where Thou art.—  
I may flutter next Thine heart !  
For if a light within me burn,  
It must be darkness in an urn,  
Unless within its crystalline,  
That unbeginning light of Thine  
Shine !—oh, Saviour, *let it shine !*

He is the last of our Greeks. The light from Troy city, with which all Greek glory began, 'threw three times

six,' said Aeschylus, that man with a soul,—beacon after beacon, into the heart of Greece. 'Three times six,' too, threw the light from Greece, when her own heart-light had gone out like Troy's, onward along the ridges of time. Three times six—but what faint beacons are the last!—sometimes only a red brand; sometimes only a small trembling flame; sometimes only a white glimmer, as of ashes breathed on by the wind; faint beacons and far ! How far ! We have watched them along the cloudy tops of the great centuries, through the ages dark but for them,—and now stand looking with eyes of farewell upon the last pale sign on the last mist-bound hill. But it is the sixteenth century. Beyond the ashes on the hill a red light is gathering—above the falling of the dews a great sun is rising : there is a rushing of life and song upward ; let it still be UPWARD !—Shakespeare is in the world ! And the Genius of English Poetry, she who only of all the earth is worthy (Goethe's spirit may hear us say so, and smile), stooping, with a royal gesture, to kiss the dead lips of the Genius of Greece, stands up her successor in the universe, by virtue of that chrism, and in right of her own crown.

# THE BOOK OF THE POETS<sup>1</sup>

## I

THE voice of the turtle is heard in the land. The green book of the earth is open, and the four winds are turning the leaves, while Nature, chief secretary to the creative Word, sits busy at her inditing of many a lovely poem—her *Flower and the Leaf* on this side, her *Cuckoo and the Nightingale* on that; her *Paradise of Dainty Devices* in and out among the valleys, her *Polyolbion* away across the hills, her *Britannia's Pastorals* on the home meadows, her sonnets of tufted primroses, her lyrical outgoings of May blossoming, her epical and didactic solemnities of light and shadow—and many an illustrative picture to garnish the universal annual. What book shall we open side by side with Nature's? First, the book of God. *The Book of the Poets* may well come next—even this book, if it deserve indeed the nobility of its name.

But this book, which is not Campbell's *Selection from the British Poets*, nor Southey's, nor different from either by being better, resembles many others of the nobly named, whether princes or hereditary legislators, in bearing a name too noble for its desert. This book, consisting of short extracts from the books of the poets, beginning with Chaucer, ending with Beattie, and missing sundry by the way—we call it indefinitely 'A book of the poets,' and leave it thankful. The extracts from Chaucer are topsy-turvy—one from the *Canterbury Tales*<sup>3</sup> prologue thrown in between two from the Knight's Tale; while Gower may blame 'his fortune'—

(And some men hold opinion  
That it is constellation,)

<sup>1</sup> Originally published as a review in the *Athenaeum*, June–August, 1842, in a series of five papers, on a selection entitled *The Book of the Poets*.

for the dry specimen crumbled off from his man-mountainism. Of Lydgate there is scarcely a page; of Occleve, Hawes, and Skelton—the two last especially interesting in poetical history,—of Sackville, and the whole generation of dramatists, not a word. 'The table is not full,' and the ringing on it of Phillips's *Splendid Shilling* will not bribe us to endurance. What! place for Pomfret's platitudes, and no place for Shakespeare's divine sonnets! and no place for Jonson's and Fletcher's lyrics! Do lyrics and sonnets perish out of place whenever their poets make tragedies too, quenched by the entity of tragedy? We suggest that Shakespeare has nearly as much claim to place in any possible book of the poets (though also a book of the poetasters) as ever can have John Hughes, who 'as a poet, is chiefly known,' saith the critical editor, 'by his tragedy of the *Siege of Damascus*.' Let this book therefore accept our boon, and remain a book of the poets, thankfully if not gloriously,—while we, on our own side, may be thankful too, that in the present days of the millennium of Jeremy Bentham—a more literally golden age than the laureates of Saturnus dreamed withal—any memory of the poets should linger with the booksellers, and 'come up this way' with the spring. The thing is good, in that it is at all. Send a little child into a garden, and he will be sure to bring you a nosegay worth having, though the red weed in it should 'side the lily,' and sundry of the prettiest flowers be held stalk upwards. Flowers are flowers and poets are poets, and 'A book of the poets' must be right welcome at every hour of the clock.

For the preliminary essay, which is very moderately well done, we embrace it, with our fingers at least, in taking up the volume. It pleases us better on the solitary point of the devotional poets

than Mr. Campbell's beautiful treatise, doing, as it seems to us, more frank justice to the Witherses, the Quarleses, and the Crashaws. Otherwise the criticism and philosophy to be found in it are scarcely of the happiest—although even the first astonishing paragraph which justifies the utility of poetry on the ground of its being an attractive variety of language, a persuasive medium for abstract ideas (as reasonable were the justification of a seraph's essence deduced from the cloud beneath his foot!), shall not provoke us back to discontent from the vision of the poets of England suggested by the title of this 'Book,' and stretching along gloriously to our survey.

Our poetry has an heroic genealogy. It arose, where the sun rises, in the far East. It came out from Arabia, and was tilted on the lance-heads of the Saracens into the heart of Europe, Armoric catching it in rebound from Spain, and England from Armoric. It issued in its first breath from Georgia, wrapt in the gathering cry of Persian Odin: and passing from the orient of the sun to the antagonistic snows of Iceland, and oversweeping the black pines of Germany and the jutting shores of Scandinavia, and embodying in itself all wayside sounds, even to the rude shouts of the brazen-throated Cimbri—so modified, multiplied, resonant in a thousand Runic echoes, it rushed abroad like a blast into Britain. In Britain, the Arabic Saracenic Armoric and the Georgian Gothic Scandinavian mixed sound at last; and the dying suspirations of the Grecian and Latin literatures, the last low stir of the *Gesta Romanorum*, with the apocryphal personations of lost authentic voices, breathed up together through the fissures of the rent universe, to help the new intonation and accomplish the cadence. Genius was thrust onward to a new slope of the world. And soon, when simpler minstrels had sat there long enough to tune the ear of the time—when Layamon and his successors had hummed long enough, like wild bees, upon the lips of our

infant poetry predestined to eloquence,—then Robert Langland, the monk, walking for cloister 'by a wode's syde,' on the Malvern hills, took counsel with his holy 'Plowman,' and sang of other visions than their highest ridge can show. While we write, the woods upon those beautiful hills are obsolete, even as Langland's verses; scarcely a shrub grows upon the hills! but it is well for the thinkers of England to remember reverently, while taking thought of her poetry they stand among the gorse, that if we may boast now of more honoured localities, of Shakespeare's 'rocky Avon,' and Spenser's 'soft-streaming Thames,' and Wordsworth's 'Rydal Mere,' still our first holy poet-ground is there.

But it is in Chaucer we touch the true height, and look abroad into the kingdoms and glories of our poetical literature—it is with Chaucer that we begin our 'Books of the Poets,' our collections and selections, our pride of place and name. And the genius of the poet shares the character of his position: he was made for an early poet, and the metaphors of dawn and spring doubly become him. A morning-star, a lark's exaltation, cannot usher in a glory better. The 'cheerful morning face,' 'the breezy call of incense-breathing morn,' you recognize in his countenance and voice: it is a voice full of promise and prophecy. He is the good omen of our poetry, the 'good bird,' according to the Romans, 'the best good angel of the spring,' the nightingale, according to his own creed of good luck, heard before the cuckoo.

Up rose the sunne, and uprose Emilie, and uprose her poet, the first of a line of kings, conscious of futurity in his smile. He is a king and inherits the earth, and expands his great soul smilingly to embrace his great heritage. Nothing is too high for him to touch with a thought, nothing too low to dower with an affection. As a complete creature cognate of life and death, he cries upon God: as a sympathetic

creature he singles out a daisy from the universe ('si douce est la marguerite'), to lie down by half a summer's day and bless it for fellowship. His senses are open and delicate, like a young child's—his sensibilities capacious of supersensual relations, like an experienced thinker's. Child-like, too, his tears and smiles lie at the edge of his eyes, and he is one proof more among the many, that the deepest pathos and the quickest gaieties hide together in the same nature. He is too wakeful and curious to lose the stirring of a leaf, yet not too wide awake to see visions of green and white ladies between the branches; and a fair house of fame and a noble court of love are built and holden in the winking of his eyelash. And because his imagination is neither too 'high fantastical' to refuse proudly the gravitation of the earth, nor too 'light of love' to lose it carelessly, he can create as well as dream, and work with clay as well as cloud—and when his men and women stand close by the actual ones, your stop-watch shall reckon no difference in the beating of their hearts. He knew the secret of nature and art—that truth is beauty,—and saying 'I will make "A Wife of Bath" as well as Emilie, and you shall remember her as long,' we do remember her as long. And he sent us a train of pilgrims, each with a distinct individuality apart from the pilgrimage, all the way from Southwark and the Tabard Inn, to Canterbury and Becket's shrine: and their laughter comes never to an end, and their talk goes on with the stars, and all the railroads which may intersect the spoil earth for ever cannot hush the 'tramp, tramp' of their horses' feet.

Controversy is provocative. We cannot help observing, because certain critics observe otherwise, that Chaucer utters as true music as ever came from poet or musician; that some of the sweetest cadences in all our English are extant in his—'swete upon his tongue' in completest modulation. Let 'Denham's strength, and Waller's sweetness join' the Io Paean of a later age, the

*eureka* of Pope and his generation. Not one of the 'Queen Anne's men,' measuring out tuneful breath upon their fingers, like ribbons for topknots, did know the art of versification as the old rude Chaucer knew it. Call him rude for the picturesqueness of the epithet; but his verse has, at least, as much regularity in the sense of true art, and more manifestly in proportion to our increasing acquaintance with his dialect and pronunciation, as can be discovered or dreamed in the French school. Critics indeed have set up a system based upon the crushed atoms of first principles, maintaining that poor Chaucer wrote by accent only! Grant to them that he counted no verses on his fingers; grant that he never disciplined his highest thoughts to walk up and down in a paddock—ten paces and a turn; grant that his singing is not after the likeness of their sing-song—but there end your admissions. It is our ineffaceable impression, in fact, that the whole theory of accent and quantity held in relation to ancient and modern poetry stands upon a fallacy, totters rather than stands; and that when considered in connexion with such old moderns as our Chaucer the fallaciousness is especially apparent. Chaucer wrote by quantity, just as Homer did before him, just as Goethe did after him, just as all poets must. Rules differ, principles are identical. All rhythm presupposes quantity. Organ-pipe or harp, the musician plays by time. Greek or English, Chaucer or Pope, the poet sings by time. What is this accent but a stroke, an emphasis, with a successive pause to make complete the time? And what is the difference between this accent and quantity but the difference between a harp-note and an organ-note? otherwise, quantity expressed in different ways? It is as easy for matter to subsist out of space, as music out of time.

Side by side with Chaucer comes Gower, who is ungratefully disregarded too often, because side by side with Chaucer. He who rides in the king's

chariot will miss the people's *hic est*. Could Gower be considered apart, there might be found signs in him of an independent royalty, however his fate may seem to lie in waiting for ever in his brother's antechamber, like Napoleon's tame kings. To speak our mind, he has been much undervalued. He is nailed to a comparative degree; and everybody seems to make it a condition of speaking of him, that something be called inferior within him, and something superior out of him. He is laid down flat, as a dark background for 'throwing out' Chaucer's lights—he is used as a *πῶς στῶ* for leaping up into the empyrean of Chaucer's praise. This is not just nor worthy. His principal poem, the *Confessio Amantis*, preceded the *Canterbury Tales*, and proves an abundant fancy, a full head and full heart, and neither ineloquent. We do not praise its design—in which the father-confessor is set up as a storyteller, like the Bishop of Tricca, 'avec l'âme,' like the Cardinal de Retz, 'la moins ecclésiastique du monde,'—while we admit that he tells his stories as if born to the manner of it, and that they are not much the graver, nor, peradventure, the holier either, for the circumstance of the confessorship. They are indeed told gracefully and pleasantly enough, and if with no superfluous life and gesture, with an active sense of beauty in some sort, and as flowing a rhythm as may bear comparison with many octosyllabics of our day; Chaucer himself having done more honour to their worth as stories than we can do in our praise, by adopting and crowning several of their number for king's sons within his own palaces. And this recalls that, at the opening of one glorious felony, the Man of Lawes Tale, he has written, a little unlawfully and ungratefully considering the connexion, some lines of harsh significance upon poor Gower—whence has been conjectured by the grey gossips of criticism, a literary jealousy, an unholy enmity, nothing less than a soul-chasm between the contemporary

poets. We believe nothing of it; no, nor of the Shakespeare and Jonson feud after it—

To alle such cursed stories we saie fy.

That Chaucer wrote in irritation is clear: that he was angry seriously and lastingly, or beyond the pastime of passion spent in a verse as provoked by a verse, there appears to us no reason for crediting. But our idea of the nature of the irritation will expound itself in our idea of the offence, which is here in Dan Gower's proper words, as extracted from the *Ladie Venus's* speech in the *Confessio Amantis*.

And grete well Chaucer whan ye mete,  
As my disciple and poëte !—

Forthy now in his daiës old,  
Thou shalt him tellë this message,  
That he upon his latter age,  
To sette an ende of alle his werke  
As he who is mine ownë clerke,  
Do make his testament of love.

We would not slander Chaucer's temper,—we believe, on the contrary, that he had the sweetest temper in the world,—and still it is our conviction, none the weaker, that he was far from being entirely pleased by this 'message.' We are sure he did not like the message, and not many poets would. His 'elvish countenance' might well grow dark, and 'his sugred mouth' speak somewhat sourly, in response to such a message. Decidedly, in our own opinion, it was an impertinent message, a provocative message, a most inexcusable and odious message! Waxing hotter ourselves the longer we think of it, there is the more excuse for Chaucer. For, consider, gentle reader! this indecorous message preceded the appearance of the *Canterbury Tales*, and proceeded from a rival poet in the act of completing his principal work—its plain significance being 'I have done my poem, and you cannot do yours because you are superannuated.' And this, while the great poet addressed was looking forward farther than the

visible horizon, his eyes dilated with a mighty purpose. And to be counselled by this, to shut them forsooth, and take his crook and dog and place in the valleys like a grey shepherd of the Pyrenees—he, who felt his foot strong upon the heights! he, with no wrinkle on his forehead deep enough to touch the outermost of inward smooth dreams—he, in the divine youth of his healthy soul, in the quenchless love of his embracing sympathies, in the untired working of his perpetual energies—to ‘make an ende of alle his werke’ and be old, as if he were not a poet! ‘Go to, O vain man!’—we do not reckon the age of the poet’s soul by the shadow on the dial! Enough that it falls upon his grave.

Occleve and Lydgate both breathed the air of the world while Chaucer breathed it, although surviving him so long as rather to take standing as his successors than contemporaries. Both called him ‘master’ with a faithful reverting tenderness, and, however we are bound to distinguish Lydgate as the higher poet of the two, Occleve’s ‘Alas’ may become the other’s lips—

Alas, that thou thine excellent prudence  
In thy bed mortell mightest not bequeath!  
For, alas! it was not bequeathed.  
Lydgate’s *Thebaid*, attached by its introduction to the *Canterbury Tales*, gives or enforces the occasion for sighing comparisons with the master’s picturesque vivacity, while equally in delicacy and intensesness we admit no progress in the disciple. He does, in fact, appear to us so much overrated by the critics, that we are tempted to extend to his poetry his own admission on his monkish dress—

I wear a habit of perfection  
Although my life agree not with that same—  
and to opine concerning the praise and poetry taken together, that the latter agrees not with that same. An elegant poet—*poeta elegans*—was he called by the courteous Pits,—a questionable compliment in most cases, while the application in the particular one agrees

not with that same. An improver of the language he is granted to be by all—and a voluminous writer of respectable faculties in his position could scarcely help being so,—he has flashes of genius, but they are not prolonged to the point of warming the soul,—can strike a bold note, but fails to hold it on,—attains to moments of power and pathos, but wears, for working days, no habit of perfection.

These are our thoughts of Lydgate; and yet when he ceased his singing, none sang better; there was silence in the land. In Scotland, indeed, poet-tongues were not all mute; the air across the borders ‘gave delight and hurt not.’ Here in the south it was otherwise: and unless we embrace in our desolation such *poems* as the riming chronicles of Harding and Fabian, we must hearken for music to the clashing of ‘Bilboa blades,’ and be content that the wars of the red and white roses should silence the warbling of the nightingales. That figure dropped to our pen’s point, and the reader may accept it as a figure—as no more. To illustrate by figures the times and the seasons of poetical manifestation and decay, is at once easier and more reasonable than to attempt to account for them by causes. We do not believe that poets multiply in peace-time like sheep and sheaves, nor that they fly, like partridges, at the first beating of the drum; and we do believe, having a previous faith in the pneumatic character of their gift, that the period of its bestowment is not subject to the calculations of our philosophy. Let, therefore, the long silence from Chaucer and his disciples down to the sixteenth century be left standing as a fact undisturbed by any good reasons for its existence, or by any other company than some harmless metaphor—harmless and ineffectual—as a glow-worm’s glitter at the foot of a colossal statue of Harpocrates. Call it, if you please, as Warton does, ‘a nipping frost succeeding a premature spring’; or call it, because we would not think our

Chaucer premature, or the silence cruel—the trance of English Poetry! her breath, once emitted creatively, indrawn and retained—herself sinking into deep sleep, like the mother of Apollonius before the glory of a vision, to awaken, to leap up (*ἐξέθοπε* says Philostratus, the narrator) in a flowery meadow, at the clapping of the white wings of a chorus of encircling swans. We shall endeavour to realize this awaking.

## II

Is Hawes a swan? a black (letter) swan? since we promised to speak of swans in connexion with the sixteenth century. Certain voices will 'say nay, say nay'; and already, and without our provocation, he seems to us unjustly depreciated. Warton was called 'the indulgent historian of our poetry' for being so kind as to discover 'one fine line' in him! What name must the overkind have, in whose susceptible memories whole passages stand up erect, claiming the epithet or the like of the epithet—and that, less as the *largesse* of the indulgent than the debt of the just? Yet Langland's *Piers Plowman*, and Chaucer's *House of Fame*, and Lydgate's *Temple of Glasseye*, and the *Pastyme of Plesure*, by Stephen Hawes, are the four columnar marbles, the four allegorical poems, on whose foundation is exalted into light the great allegorical poem of the world, Spenser's *Faery Quean*. There was a force of suggestion which preceded Sackville's, and Hawes uttered it. His work is very grave for a pastime, being a course of instruction upon the seven sciences, the trivium and quadrivium of the schools; whereby Grand Amour, scholar and hero, wooing and winning Belle Pucelle, marries her according to the *lex ecclesiae*, is happy 'all the rest of his life' by the *lex* of all matrimonial romances—and, at leisure and in old age, dies by the *lex naturae*. He tells his own story quite to an end, including the particulars of his funeral and epitaph; and is considerate enough to leave the reader in full assurance of

his posthumous reputation. And now let those who smile at the design dismiss their levity before the poet's utterance:—

O mortall folke, you may beholde and see  
Howe I lye here, sometime a mighty knight.  
The ende of joye and all prosperitie  
Is death at last thorough his course and  
might.

After the day there cometh the dark night,  
For though the day appear ever so long,  
*At last the bell ringeth to even song.*

—it 'ringeth' in our ear with a soft and solemn music to which the soul is prodigal of echoes. We may answer for the poetic faculty of its 'maker.' He is, in fact, not merely ingenious and fanciful, but *abounds*—the word, with an allowance for the unhappiness of his subject, is scarcely too strong—with passages of thoughtful sweetness and cheerful tenderness, at which we are constrained to smile and sigh, and both for 'pastyme.'

Was never payne but it had joye at last  
In the fayre morrow.

There is a lovely cadence! And then Amour's courtship of his 'swete ladie'—a 'cynosure' before Milton's!—conducted as simply, yet touchingly, as if he were innocent of the seven deadly sciences, and knew no more of 'the Ladye Grammere' than might become a troubadour:—

O swete ladie, the true and perfect star  
Of my true heart! Oh, take ye now pitie!  
Think on my payne which am tofore you  
here,—

With your swete eyes behold you me, and  
see

How thought and woe by great extremitie,  
Hath changed my colour into pale and wan!  
It was not so when I to love began.

The date assigned to this *Pastyme of Plesure* is 1506, some fifty years before the birth of Spenser. Whether it was written in vain for Spenser, judge ye. To the present generation it is covered deep with the dust of more than three centuries, and few tongues ask above the place—'What lies here?'

Barclay is our next swan—and verily might be mistaken, in any sort taken,

by naturalists, for a crow. He is our first writer of eclogues, the translator of the *Ship of Fools*, and a thinker of his own thoughts with sufficient intrepidity.

Skelton 'floats double, swan and shadow,' as poet laureate of the University of Oxford, and 'royal orator' of Henry VII. He presents a strange specimen of a court-poet, and if, as Erasmus says, 'Britannicarum literarum lumen' at the same time—the light is a pitchy torchlight, wild and rough. Yet we do not despise Skelton: despise him? it were easier to hate. The man is very strong—he triumphs, foams, is rabid, in the sense of strength; he mesmerizes our souls with the sense of strength—it is as easy to despise a wild beast in a forest as John Skelton, poet laureate. He is as like a wild beast as a poet laureate can be. In his wonderful dominion over language he tears it, as with teeth and paws, ravenously, savagely: devastating rather than creating, dominant rather for liberty than for dignity. It is the very *sans-culottism* of eloquence—the oratory of a Silenus drunk with anger only! Mark him as the satyr of poets! fear him as the Juvenal of satyrs! and watch him with his rugged, rapid, picturesque savageness, his 'breathless rimes,' to use the fit phrase of the satirist Hall, or—

His rimes all ragged,  
Tattered, and jagged,

to use his own,—climbing the high trees of Delphi, and pelting from thence his victim underneath, whether priest or cardinal, with rough-rinded apples! And then ask, could he write otherwise than so? The answer is this opening to his poem of the *Bouge of Court*, and the impression inevitable, of the serious sense of beauty and harmony to which it gives evidence:—

In autumn when the sun in *virgine*,  
By radiant heat enripened hath our *corne*,  
When Luna, full of mutabilitie,  
As empress, the diadem hath worne  
Of our pole Arctic, smiling as in scorn  
At our folie and our unstedfastnesse.—

But our last word of Skelton must be, that we do not doubt his influence for good upon our language. He was a writer singularly fitted for beating out the knots of the cordage, and straining the lengths to extension; a rough worker at rough work. Strong, rough Skelton! We can no more deride him than my good lord cardinal could. If our critical eyebrows must motion contempt at somebody of the period, we choose Tusser, and his *Five Hundred Points of Good Husbandry and Housewifery*. Whatever we say of Tusser, no fear of harming a poet,—

Make ready a bin  
For chaff to lie in,—

and there may be room *therein*, in compliment to the author of the proposition, for his own verses.

Lord Surrey passes as the tuner of our English nearly up to its present pitch of delicacy and smoothness; and we admit that he had a melody in his thoughts which they dared not disobey. That he is, as has been alleged by a chief critic, 'our first metrical writer,' lies not in our creed; and even Turberville's more measured praise,—

Our mother tongue by him hath got such  
lyght,  
That ruder speche thereby is banisht  
qwyht,—

we have difficulty in accepting. We venture to be of opinion that he did not belong to that order of master-minds with whom transitions originate, although qualified, by the quickness of a yielding grace, to assist effectually a transitional movement. There are names which catch the proverbs of praise as a hedge-thorn catches sheep's wool, by position and approximation rather than adaptitude: and this name is of them. Yet it is a high name. His poetry makes the ear lean to it, it is so sweet and low; the English he made it of being ready to be sweet, and falling ripe in sweetness into other hands than his. For the poems of his friend, Sir Thomas Wyatt, have more thought, freedom, and variety, more general

earnestness, more of the attributes of masterdom, than Lord Surrey's; while it were vain to reproach for lack of melody the writer of that loveliest lyric, 'My lute, be still.' And Wyatt is various in metres, and the first song-writer (that praise we must secure to him) of his generation. For the rest, there is an inequality in the structure of his verses which is very striking and observable in Surrey himself: as if the language, consciously insecure in her position, were balancing her accentual being and the forms of her pronunciation, half giddily, on the very turning point of transition. Take from Wyatt such a stanza as this, for instance,—

The long love that in my thoughts I harbour,  
And in my heart doth keep his residence,  
Into my face presseth with bold pretence,  
And there campeth, displaying his banner.—  
and oppose to it the next example,  
polished as Pope,—

But I am here in Kent and Christendom,  
Among the Muses where I read and rime;  
Where, if thou list, mine own John Pains,  
to come,  
Thou shalt be judge how I do spend my time.

It is well to mark Wyatt as a leader in the art of didactic poetic composition under the epistolary form, 'sternly milde' (as Surrey said of his countenance) in the leaning toward satire. It is very well to mark many of his songs as of exceeding beauty, and as preserving clear their touching simplicity from that plague of over-curious conceits which infest his writings generally. That was the plague of Italian literature transmitted by contagion, together with better things—together with the love of love-lore, and the sonnet structure, the summer-bower for one fair thought, delighted in and naturalized in England by Wyatt and Surrey. For the latter,—

From Tuscan came his ladye's worthy race:  
and his Muse as well as Geraldine.  
Drops from Plato's cup, passing through  
Petrarch's, not merely perfumed and  
coloured but diluted by the medium,  
we find in Surrey's cup also. We must  
not underpraise Surrey to balance the

overpraise we murmur at. Denying him supremacy as a reformer, the denial of his poetic nobleness is far from us. We attribute to him the chivalry of the *light* ages—we call him a scholastic troubadour. The longest and most beautiful of his poems ('describing the lover's whole state') was a memory in the mind of Milton when he wrote his *Allegro*. He has that measure of pathos whose expression is no gesture of passion, but the skilful fingering on a well-tuned lute. He affects us at worst not painfully, and

With easie sighs such as folks draw in love.

He wrote the first English blank verse, in his translation of two books of the *Aeneid*. He leads, in seeming, to the ear of the world, and by predestination of 'popular breath,' that little choral swan-chant which, swelled by Wyatt, Vaux, Bryan, and others, brake the common air in the days of the eighth Henry. And he fulfilled in sorrow his awarded fate as a poet,—his sun going down at noon!—and the cleft head, with its fair youthful curls, testifying like that fabled head of Orpheus to the music of the living tongue!

Sackville, Lord Dorset, takes up the new blank verse from the lips of Surrey, and turns it to its right use of tragedy. We cannot say that he does for it much more. His *Gorboduc*, with some twenty years between it and Shakespeare, is farther from the true drama in versification and all the rest than *Gammer Gurton* is from *Gorboduc*. Sackville's blank verse, like Lord Surrey's before him, is only heroic verse without rime; and we must say so in relation to Gascoigne, who wrote the second blank-verse tragedy, the *Jocasta*, and the first blank-verse original poem, *The Steele Glass*. The secret of the blank verse of Shakespeare, and Fletcher, and Milton, did not dwell with them! the arched cadence, with its artistic key-stone and under-flood of broad continuous sound, was never achieved nor attempted by its first builders. We

sometimes whisper in our silence that Marlowe's 'brave sublunary' instincts should have groped that way. But no! Chaucer had more sense of music in the pause than Marlowe had. Marlowe's rhythm is not, indeed, hard and stiff and uniform, like the sentences of *Gorboduc*, as if the pattern one had been cut in boxwood; there is a difference between uniformity and monotony, and he found it; his cadence revolves like a wheel, progressively, if slowly and heavily, and with an orbicular grandeur of unbroken and unvaried music.

It remains to us to speak of the work by which Sackville is better known than by *Gorboduc*—the *Mirror for Magistrates*. The design of it has been strangely praised, seeing that whatever that peculiar merit were, Lydgate's *Fall of Princes* certainly cast the shadow before. But Sackville's commencement of the execution proved the master's hand; and that the great canvas fell abandoned to the blurring brushes of inadequate disciples was an ill-fortune compensated adequately by the honour attributed to the Induction—of inducing a nobler genius than his own, even Spenser's, to a nobler labour. We cannot doubt the influence of that Induction. Its colossal figures, in high allegorical relief, were exactly adapted to impress the outspread fancy of the most sensitive of poets. A yew-tree cannot stand at noon in an open pleasance without throwing the outline of its branches on the broad and sunny grass. Still, admitting the suggestion in its fullness, nothing can differ more than the allegorical results of the several geniuses of Lord Dorset and Spenser. Teardrop and dewdrop respond more similarly to analysis—or morbid grief and ideal joy. Sackville stands close wrapt in the 'blanket of his dark,' and will not drop his mantle for the sun. Spenser's business is with the lights of the world, and the lights beyond the world.

But this Sackville, this Earl of Dorset ('Oh, a fair earl was he!'), stands too low for admeasurement with Spenser:

and we must look back, if covetous of comparisons, to some one of a loftier and more kingly stature. We must look back far, and stop at Chaucer. Spenser and Chaucer do naturally remind us of each other, they two being the most cheerful-hearted of the poets—with whom cheerfulness, as an attribute of poetry, is scarcely a common gift. But the world will be upon us! The world moralizes of late, and in its fashion, upon the immorality of mournful poems, upon the criminality of 'melodious tears,' upon the morbidness of the sorrows of poets—because Lord Byron was morbidly sorrowful, and because a crowd of his ephemeral imitators hung their heads all on one side and were insincerely sorrowful. The fact, however, has been, apart from Lord Byron and his disciples, that the 'ai ai' of Apollo's flower is vocally sad in the prevailing majority of poetical compositions. The philosophy is, perhaps, that the poetic temperament, halfway between the light of the ideal and the darkness of the real, and rendered by each more sensitive to the other, and unable, without a struggle, to pass out clear and calm into either, bears the impress of the necessary conflict in dust and blood! The philosophy may be, that only the stronger spirits do accomplish this victory, having lordship over their own genius—whether they accomplish it by looking bravely to the good ends of evil things, which is the practical ideal, and possible to all men in a measure—or by abstracting the inward sense from sensual things and their influences, which is subjectivity perfected—or by glorifying sensual things with the inward sense, which is objectivity transfigured—or by attaining to the highest vision of the idealist, which is subjectivity turned outward into an actual objectivity.

To the last triumph Shakespeare attained; but Chaucer and Spenser fulfilled their destiny and grew to their mutual likeness as cheerful poets by certain of the former processes. They two are alike in their cheerfulness, yet are their cheerfulnesses most unlike.

Each poet laughs : yet their laughers ring with as far a difference as the sheep-bell on the hill and the joy-bell in the city. Each is earnest in his gladness : each active in persuading you of it. You are persuaded, and hold each for a cheerful man. The whole difference is, that Chaucer has a cheerful humanity : Spenser, a cheerful ideality. One rejoices walking on the sunny side of the street : the other, walking out of the street in a way of his own, kept green by a blessed vision. One uses the adroitness of his fancy by distilling out of the visible universe her occult smiles : the other, by fleeing beyond the possible frown, the occasions of natural ills, to that 'cave of cloud' where he may smile safely to himself. One holds festival with men—seldom so coarse and loud indeed as to startle the deer from their green covert at Woodstock—or with homely Nature and her 'douce Marguerite' low in the grasses : the other adopts for his playfellows' imaginary or spiritual existences, and will not say a word to Nature herself, unless it please her to dress for his masque and speak daintily sweet and rare like a spirit. The human heart of one utters oracles—the imagination of the other speaks for his heart, and we miss no prophecy. For music, we praised Chaucer's, and not only as Dryden did, for 'a Scotch tune.' But never issued there from lip or instrument, or the tuned causes of Nature, more lovely sound than we gather from our Spenser's art. His mouth is vowed away from the very possibilities of harshness. Right leans to wrong in its excess. His rhythm is the continuity of melody, not harmony, because too smooth for modulation—because 'by his vow' he dares not touch a discord for the sake of consummating a harmony. It is the singing of an angel in a dream : it has not enough of contrary for waking music. Of his great poem we may say, that we miss no humanity in it, because we make a new humanity out of it and are satisfied in our human hearts—a new humanity vivified by the poet's life, moving in

happy measure to the chanting of his thoughts, and upon ground supernaturally beautified by his sense of the beautiful. As an allegory, it enchants us away from its own purposes. Una is Una to us ; and Sans Foy is a traitor, and Errour is 'an ugly monster,' with a 'taylor' ; and we thank nobody in the world, not even Spenser, for trying to prove it otherwise. Do we dispraise an allegorical poem by throwing off its allegory ? we trow not. Probably, certainly to our impression, the highest triumph of an allegory, from this of the *Faery Queen* down to the *Pilgrim's Progress*, is the abnegation of itself.

Oh those days of Elizabeth ! We call them the days of Elizabeth, but the glory fell over the ridge, in illumination of the half-century beyond ! those days of Elizabeth ! Full were they of poets as the summer-days are of birds,—

No branch on which a fine bird did not sit,  
No bird but his sweet song did shrilly sing,  
No song but did containe a lovely dit.

We hear of the dramatists, and shall speak of them presently ; but the lyric singers were yet more numerous,—there were singers in every class. Never since the first nightingale brake voice in Eden arose such a jubilee-concert—never before nor since has such a crowd of true poets uttered true poetic speech in one day ! Not in England evermore ! Not in Greece, that we know. Not in Rome, by what we know. Talk of their Augustan era—we will not talk of it, lest we desecrate our own of Elizabeth. The latter was rightly prefigured by our figure of the chorus of swans. It was besides the Milky Way of poetry : it was the miracle-age of poetical history. We may fancy that the master-souls of Shakespeare and Spenser, breathing, stirring in divine emotion, shot vibratory life through other souls in electric association ! we may hear, in fancy, one wind moving every leaf in a forest—one voice responded to by a thousand rock-echoes. Why, a common man walking through the earth in those days grew a poet by position—even as a child's

shadow cast upon a mountain slope is dilated to the aspect of a giant's.

If we, for our own parts, did enact a Briareus, we might count these poets on the fingers of our hundred hands, after the fashion of the poets of Queen Anne's time, counting their syllables. We do not talk of them as 'faultless monsters,' however wonderful in the multitude and verity of their gifts: their faults were numerous, too. Many poets of an excellent sweetness, thinking of poetry that, like love,

It was to be all made of fantasy!

fell poetry-sick, as they might fall love-sick, and knotted associations, far and free enough to girdle the earth withal, into true love-knots of quaintest devices. Many poets affected novelty rather than truth; and many attained to novelty rather by attitude than altitude, whether of thought or word. Worst of all, many were incompetent to Sir Philip Sidney's ordeal—the translation of their verses into prose—and would have perished utterly by that hot ploughshare. Still, the natural healthy eye turns toward the light, and the true calling of criticism remains the distinguishing of beauty. Love and honour to the poets of Elizabeth—honour and love to them all! Honour even to the fellow workers with Sackville in the *Mirror for Magistrates*, to Ferrers, Churchyard, and others, who had their hand upon the ore if they did not clasp it!—and to Warner, the poet of *Albion's England*, singing snatches of ballad pathos, while he worked, for the most part heavily, too, with a bowed back as at a stiff soil—and to Gascoigne, reflecting beauty and light from his *Stele Glass*, though his *Fruits of War* are scarcely fruits from Parnassus—and to Daniel, tender and noble, and teaching, in his *Musophilus*, the chivalry of poets, though in his *Civil Wars* somewhat too historical, as Drayton has written of him—and to Drayton, generous in the *Polyolbion* of his poet-blessing on every hill and river through this fair England, and not ineloquent in his *Heroical Epistles*, though

somewhat tame and level in his *Barons' Wars*—and to the two brother Fletchers, Giles and Phineas, authors of *Christ's Victory* and *The Purple Island*, for whom the Muse's kiss followed close upon the mother's, gifting their lips with no vulgar music and their house with that noble kinsman, Fletcher the dramatist! Honour, too, to Davies, who 'reasoned in verse' with a strong mind and strong enunciation, though he wrote one poem on the Soul and another on Dancing, and concentrated the diverging rays of intellect and folly in his sonnets on the reigning Astraea—and to Fulke Greville, Lord Brooke, who had deep thoughts enough to accomplish ten poets of these degenerate days, though because of some obscurity in their expression you would find some twenty critics 'full of oaths' by the pyramids, that they all meant nought—and to Chamberlayne, picturesque, imaginative, earnest (by no means dramatic) in his poetic romance of *Pharonnida*, though accumulative to excess of figures, and pedantic in such verbal learning as 'entheon charms,' the 'catagraph' of a picture, the exagitations and congestions of elements, *et sic omnia!*—to Chalkhill, wrapt, even bound, 'in soft Lydian airs,' till himself, as well as his Clearchus and Thealma, fall asleep in involutions of harmony—and to Browne, something languid in his *Britannia's Pastorals*, by sitting in the sun with Guarini and Marini, and 'perplex in the extreme' by a thousand images and sounds of beauty calling him across the dewy fields—and to Wither, author of the *Shepherd's Hunting*, and how much else? Wither, who wrote of poetry like a poet, and in return has been dishonoured and misprised by some of his own kind!—a true sincere poet of blessed oracles! Honour, love, and praise to him and all! May pardon come to us from the unnamed.

Honour also to the translators of poems—to such as Chapman and Sylvester—great hearts, interpreters of great hearts, and afterwards worthily thanked by the Miltons, and Popes, and Keatses, for

their gift of greatness to the language of their England.

Honour to the satirists!—to Marston, who struck boldly and coarsely at an offence from the same level with the offender—to Hall, preserving his own elevation, and flashing downwardly those thick lightnings in which we smell the sulphur—and to Donne, whose instinct to beauty overcame the resolution of his satiric humour.

Honour, again, to the singers of brief poems, to the lyrists and sonneteers! O Shakespeare, let thy name rest gently among them, perfuming the place. We 'swear' that these sonnets and songs do verily breathe, 'not of themselves, but *thee*'; and we recognize and bless them as short sighs from thy large poetic heart, burdened with diviner inspiration! O rare Ben Jonson, let us have thy songs, rounded each with a spherical thought, and the lyrics from thy masques alive with learned fantasy, and thine epigrams keen and quaint; and thy noble epitaphs, under which the dead seem stirring! Fletcher, thou shalt be with us—prophet of *Comus* and *Penseroso*! giddy with inhalation from the fount of the beautiful, speaking out wildly thought upon thought, measure upon measure, as the bird sings, because his own voice is lovely to him. Sidney, true knight and fantastic poet, whose soul did too curiously inquire the fashion of the beautiful—the fashion rather than the secret!—but left us in one line the completest *Ars Poetica* extant,—

Foole, sayde my Muse to mee, looke in  
thine heart, and write.

Thy name be famous in all England and Arcadia! And Raleigh, tender and strong, of voice sweet enough to answer that 'Passionate Shepherd,' yet trumpet-shrill to speak the 'Soul's errand' thrilling the depths of our own! having honour and suffering as became a poet, from the foot of the Lady of England light upon his cloak, to the cloak of his executioner wrapping redly his breathless corpse. Marlowe, we must not forget his 'Shepherd' in his tragedies:

and 'Come live with me' sounds passionately still through the dead cold centuries. And Drummond, the overpraised and under-praised—a passive poet, if we may use the phraseology—who was not careful to achieve greatness, but whose natural pulses beat music, and with whom the consciousness of life was the sentiment of beauty. And Lyly, shriven from the sins of his *Euphues*, with a quaint grace in his songs; and Donne, who takes his place naturally in this new class, having a dumb *angel*, and knowing more noble poetry than he articulates. Herrick, the Ariel of poets, sucking 'where the bee sucks' from the rose-heart of Nature, and reproducing the fragrance idealized; and Carew, using all such fragrance as a courtly essence, with less of self-abandonment and more of artificial application; and Herbert, with his face as the face of a spirit, dimly bright; and fantastic Quarles, in rude and graphic gesticulation, expounding verity and glory; and Breton, and Turberville, and Lodge, and Hall (not the satirist), and all the hundred swans, nameless, or too numerous to be named, of that Cayster of the rolling time.

Then, high in the miraculous climax, come the dramatists—from whose sinews was knit the overcoming strength of our literature over all the nations of the world. 'The drama is the executive of literature,' said De Staël: and the Greek's 'action, action, action' we shall not miss in our drama. Honour to the dramatists, as honour *from* them! Shakespeare is our security that we shall say so less briefly soon.

### III

WE must take a few steps backward for position's sake, and then be satisfied with a rapid glance at the Drama. From the days of Norman William, the representations called *Mysteries* and *Moralities* had come and gone without a visible poet; and Skelton appears before us almost the first English claimant of a dramatic reputation, with the author-

ship of the interludes of *Magnificence* and the *Nigromansir*. The latter is chiefly famous for Warton's affirmation of having held it in his hands, giving courteous occasion to Ritson's denial of its existence: and our own palms having never been crossed by the silver of either, we cannot prophesy on the degree of individual honour involved in the literary claim. Bale, one of the eighth Henry's bishops, was an active composer of Moralities; and John Heywood, his royal jester and 'author of that very merry interlude' called *The Four P's*, united in his merriment that caustic sense with that lively ease which have not been too common since in his accomplished dramatic posterity. Yet those who in the bewilderment of their admirations (or senses) attribute to John Heywood the *Pinner of Wakefield* are more obviously—we are sorely tempted to add, more ridiculously—wrong, than those who attribute it to Shakespeare. The Canon of Windsor's *Ralph Royster Doyster*, and the Bishop of Bath and Wells's *Gammer Gurton*, followed each other close into light, the earliest modern comedies, by the force of the *âme ecclésiastique*. A little after came Ferrys, memorialized by Puttenham as 'the principall man of his profession' (of poetry), and 'of no lesse myrthe and felicitie than John Heywood, but of much more skille and magnificence in his meter.' But seeing that even Oblivion forgot Ferrys, leaving his name and Puttenham's praise when she defaced his works, and seeing, too, the broad farcedom of the earlier, however episcopal, writers, we find ourselves in an unwilling posture of recognition before Edwards, as the first extant regular dramatist of England. It is a pitiful beginning. *The Four P's* would be a more welcome A to us. They express more power with their inarticulate roughness than does this *Damon and Pythias*, with its rimed, loitering frigidity, or even than this *Palamon and Aricie*, in which the sound of the hunting horn cast into ecstasy the too gracious soul of Queen Elizabeth. But Sir John Davies's

divine Astraea was, at that grey dawn of her day, ignorant of greater poets; and we ('happy in this') go on toward them. After Edwards, behold Sackville with that *Gorboduc* we have named, the first blank-verse tragedy we can name, praised by Sidney for its exemplary preservation of the unities and for 'climbing to the height of Seneca his stile,'—tight-fitting praise, considering that the composition is high enough to account for its snow, and cold enough to emulate the Roman's. And after Sackville behold the first dramatic geniuses, in juxtaposition with the first dramatists—Peele, and Kyd, mad as his own Hieronimo (we will grant it to such critics as are too utterly in their senses), only—

When he is mad,

Then, methinks, he is a brave fellow!

and then, methinks, and by such madness, the possibility of a Shakespeare was revealed. Kyd's blank verse is probably the first breaking of the true soil; and certainly far better and more dramatic than Marlowe's is—crowned poet as the latter stands before us—poet of the English Faustus, which we will not talk of against the German, nor set up its grand, luxurious, melancholy devil against Goethe's subtle, biting, Voltairish devil, each being devil after its kind,—the poet of the Jew which Shakespeare drew (not), yet a true Jew, 'with a berde,'—and the poet of the first historical drama,—since the *Gorboduc* scarcely can be called one. Marlowe was more essentially a poet than a dramatist; and if the remark appear self-evident and universally applicable, we will take its reverse in Kyd, who was more essentially, with all his dramatic faults, a dramatist than a poet. Passing from the sound of the elemental monotonies of the rhythm of Marlowe, we cannot pause before Nash and Greene to distinguish their characteristics. It is enough to name these names of gifted dramatists, who lived, or at least wrote, rather before Shakespeare than with him, and helped to make him credible.

Through them, like a lens, we behold his light. Of them we conjecture—these are the blind elements working before the earthquake;—before the great 'Shakescene,' as Greene said when he was cross! And we may say when we are fanciful, these are the experiments of Nature, made in her solution of the problem of how much deathless poetry will agree with how much mortal clay!—these are the potsherd vessels half filled, and failing at last,—until up to the edge of *one* the liquid inspiration rose and bubbled in hot beads to quench the thirsty lips of the world.

It is hard to speak of Shakespeare—these measures of the statures of common poets fall from our hands when we seek to measure him: it is harder to praise him. Like the tall plane-tree which Xerxes found standing in the midst of an open country, and honoured inappropriately with his 'barbaric pomp,' with bracelets and chains and rings suspended on its branches, so has it been with Shakespeare. A thousand critics have commended him with praises as unsuitable as a gold ring to a plane-tree. A thousand hearts have gone out to him, carrying necklaces. Some have discovered that he individualized, and some that he generalized, and some that he subtilized—almost *trans-transcendentally*. Some would have it that he was a wild genius, sowing wild oats and stealing deer to the end, with no more judgement forsooth than 'youth the hare'; and some, that his very pulses beat by that critical law of art in which he was blameless!—some, that all his study was in his horn-book, and not much of that; and some, that he was as learned a polyglot as ever had been dull but for Babel!—some, that his own ideal burned steadfastly within his own fixed contemplations, unstirred by breath from without; and some, that he wrote for the gold on his palm and the 'rank popular breath' in his nostrils, apart from consciousness of greatness and desire of remembrance. If the opinions prove nothing, their contradictions prove the exaltation of the object;

their contradictions are praise. For men differ about things above their reach, not within it—about the mountains in the moon, not Primrose Hill; and more than seven cities of men have differed in their talk about Homer also! Homer, also, was convicted of indiscreet nodding; and Homer, also, had no manner of judgement! and the *Ars Poetica* people could not abide his bad taste! And we find another analogy. We, who have no leaning to the popular cant of Romanticism and Classicism, and believe the old Greek *BEAUTY* to be both new and old, and as alive and not more grey in Webster's *Duchess of Malfy* than in Aeschylus's *Eumenides*, do reverence this Homer and this Shakespeare as the colossal borderers of the two intellectual departments of the world's age—do behold from their feet the antique and modern literatures sweep outwardly away, and conclude, that whereas the Greek bore in his depth the seed and prophecy of all the Hellenic and Roman poets, so did Shakespeare, 'whose seed was in himself' also, those of a later generation!

For the rest we must speak briefly of Shakespeare, and very weakly too, except for love. That he was a great natural genius nobody, we believe, has doubted—the fact has passed with the cheer of mankind; but that he was a great artist the majority has doubted. Yet Nature and Art cannot be reasoned apart into antagonistic principles. Nature is God's art—the accomplishment of a spiritual significance hidden in a sensible symbol. Poetic art (man's) looks past the symbol with a divine guess and reach of soul into the mystery of the significance—disclosing from the analysis of the visible things the synthesis or unity of the ideal—and expounds like symbol and like significance out of the infinite of God's doing into the finite of man's comprehending. Art lives by Nature, and not the bare mimetic life generally attributed to Art: she does not imitate, she expounds. *Interpres naturae*—is the poet-artist; and the poet wisest in Nature is the most

artistic poet! and thus our Shakespeare passes to the presidency unquestioned, as the greatest artist in the world. We believe in his judgement as in his genius. We believe in his learning, both of books and men, and hills and valleys: in his grammars and dictionaries we do not believe. In his philosophy of language we believe absolutely—in his Babel-learning, not at all. We believe reverently in the miracle of his variety; and it is observable that we become aware of it less by the numerousness of his persons and their positions than by the *depth* of the least of either—by the sense of visibility beyond what we see, as in Nature. Our creed goes on to declare him most passionate and most rational—of an emotion which casts us into thought, of a reason which leaves us open to emotion! most grave and most gay—while we scarcely can guess that the man Shakespeare is grave or gay, because he interposes between ourselves and his personality the whole breadth and length of his ideality. His associative faculty—the wit's faculty besides the poet's—for him who was both wit and poet, shed sparks like an electric wire. He was wise in the world, having studied it in his heart; what is called 'the knowledge of the world' being just the knowledge of one heart, and certain exterior symbols. What else? What otherwise could he, the young transgressor of Sir Thomas Lucy's fences, new from Stratford and the Avon, close in theatric London, have seen, or touched, or handled of the Hamlets and Lears and Othellos, that he should draw them? 'How can I take portraits,' said Marmontel, in a similar inexperience, 'before I have beheld faces?' Voltaire embraced him, in reply. Well applauded, Voltaire. It was a *mot* for Marmontel's utterance, and Voltaire's praise—for Marmontel, not for Shakespeare. Every being is his own centre to the universe, and in himself must one foot of the compasses be fixed to attain to any measurement—nay, every being is his own mirror to the universe. Shakespeare wrote from

within—the beautiful; and we recognize from within—the true. He is universal, because he is individual. And, without any prejudice of admiration, we may go on to account his faults to be the proofs of his power—the cloud of dust cast up by the multitude of the chariots. The activity of his associative faculty is occasionally morbid: in the abundance of his winged thoughts the locust flies with the bee, and the ground is dark with the shadow of them. Take faults, take excellences, it is impossible to characterize this Shakespeare by an epithet—have we heard the remark before, that it should sound so obvious? We say of Corneille, the noble; of Racine, the tender; of Aeschylus, the terrible; of Sophocles, the perfect; but not one of these words, not one appropriately descriptive epithet, can we attach to Shakespeare without a conscious recoil. Shakespeare! the name is the description.

He is the most wonderful artist in blank verse of all in England, and almost the earliest. We do not say that he first broke the enchaining monotony, of which the Sackvilles and the Marlowes left us complaining; because the versification of *Hieronimo* ran at its own strong will, and the *Pinner of Wakefield* may have preceded his first plays. We do not even say, what we might, that his hand first proved the compass and infinite modulation of the new instrument; but we do say, that it never answered another hand as it answered his. We do say, this fingering was never learned of himself by another. From Massinger's more resonant majesty, from even Fletcher's more numerous and artful cadences, we turn back to his artlessness of art, to his singular and supreme estate as a versificator. Often when he is at the sweetest, his words are poor monosyllables, his pauses frequent to brokenness, and the structure of the several lines less varied than was taught after Fletcher's masterdom; but the whole results in an ineffable charming of the ear which we acquiesce in without seeking its cause, a happy mystery of music.

This is little for Shakespeare; yet so much for the place, that we are forced into brevities for our observations which succeed. We chronicle only the names of Chapman, Dekker, Webster, Tourneur, Randolph, Middleton, and Thomas Heywood, although great names, and worthy, it is not too much to add, of Shakespeare's brotherhood. Many besides lean from our memory to the paper, but we put them away reverently. It was the age of the dramatists—the age of strong passionate men, scattering on every side their good and evil oracles of vehement humanity, and extenuating no thought in its word: and in that age 'to write like a man' was a deed accomplished by many besides him of whom it was spoken, Jonson's 'son Cartwright.'

At Jonson's name we stop perforce, and do salutation in the dust to the impress of that 'learned sock.' He was a learned man, as everybody knows; and, as everybody does not believe, not the worse for his learning. His material, brought laboriously from east and west, is wrapped in a flame of his own. If the elasticity and abandonment of Shakespeare and of certain of Shakespeare's brothers are not found in his writings, the reason of the defects need not be sought out in his readings. His genius, high and verdant as it grew, yet belonged to the hard woods: it was lance-wood rather than bow-wood—a genius rather noble than graceful—eloquent, with a certain severity and emphasis of enunciation. It would have been the same if he, too, had known 'little Latin and lesse Greek.' There was a dash of the rhetorical in his dramatic. Not that we deny him empire over the passions: his heart had rhetoric as well as his understanding, and he wrote us a *Sad Shepherd* as well as a *Catiline*. His versification heaves heavily with thought. For his comic powers, let *Volpone* and *The Alchymist* attest them with that unextinguishable laughter which is the laughter of gods or poets still more than of the wits' coffee-house. Was it 'done at the Mermaid'—was it ever fancied there, that 'rare Ben Jonson' should be called

a pedantic poet? Nay, but only a scholastic one.

And Beaumont and Fletcher, the Castor and Pollux of this starry poetic sphere (*lucida sidera*!), our silence shall not cover them; nor will we put asunder, in our speech, the names which friendship and poetry joined together, nor distinguish by a laboured analysis the vivacity of one from the solidity of the other; seeing that men who, according to tradition, lived in one house, and wore one cloak, and wrote on one page, may well, by the sanctity of that one grave they have also in common, maintain for ever beyond it the unity they coveted. The characteristics of these writers stand out in a softened light from the deep tragic background of the times. We may liken them to Shakespeare in one mood of his mind, because there are few classes of beauty the type or likeness of which is not discoverable in Shakespeare. From the rest they stand out contrastingly, as the Apollo of the later Greek sculpture-school,—too graceful for divinity and too vivacious for marble,—placed in a company of the antiquer statues with their grand blind look of the almightiness of repose. We cannot say of these poets as of the rest, 'they write all like men'; we cannot think they write like women either—perhaps they write a little like centaurs. We are of opinion in any way that the grace is more obvious than the strength; and there may be something centauresque and of twofold nature in their rushing mutabilities, and changes on passion and weakness. Clearest of all is that they wrote like poets, and in a versification most surpassingly musical though liberal, as if music served them for love's sake, unbound! They had an excellent genius, but not a strong enough invention to include judgement; judgement being the consistency of invention, and consistency always, whether in morals or literature, depending upon strength. We do not, in fact, find in them any perfect and covenanted whole—we do not find it in character, or in plot, or in composition; and lamenting the defect on many grounds we do so on this chief

one, that their good is just good, their evil just evil, unredeemed into good like Shakespeare's and Nature's evil by unity of design, but lying apart, a willingly chosen, through and through evil—and 'by this time it stinketh.' If other results are less lamentable they are no less fatal. The mirror which these poets held up to us is vexed with a thousand cracks, and everything visible is in fragments. Their conceptions all tremble on a peradventure—'peradventure they shall do well': there is no royal absolute will that they should do well—the poets are less kings than workmen. And being workmen they are weak—the moulds fall from their hands—are clutched with a spasm or fall with a faintness. After which querulousness we shall leave the question as to whether their tragic or comic powers be put to more exquisite use—not for solution, nor for doubt (since we hold fast an opinion), but for praise the most rarely appropriate or possible.

One passing word of Ford, the pathetic—for he may wear on his sleeve the epithet of Euripides, and no daw peck there. Most tender is he, yet not to feebleness—most mournful, yet not to languor; yet we like to hear the warhorse leaps of Dekker on the same tragic ground with him, producing at once contrast and completeness. Ungrateful thought!—the *Witch of Edmonton* bewitched us to it. Ford can fill the ear and soul singly with the trumpet-note of his pathos; and in its pauses you shall hear the murmuring voices of Nature—such a nightingale, for instance, as never sang on a common night. Then that death scene in the *Broken Heart*! who has equalled that? It is single in the drama—the tragic of tragedy, and the sublime of grief. A word, too, of Massinger, who writes all like a giant—a dry-eyed giant. He is too ostentatiously strong for flexibility, and too heavy for rapidity, and monotonous through his perpetual final trochee; his gesture and enunciation are slow and majestic. And another word of Shirley, an inferior writer, though touched, to our fancy,

with something of a finer ray, and closing, in worthy purple, the procession of the Elizabethan men. Shirley is the last dramatist. *Valete et plaudite, o posteri.*

Standing in his traces, and looking backward and before, we become aware of the distinct demarcations of five eras of English poetry: the first, the Chaucerian, although we might call it *Chaucer*; the second, the Elizabethan; the third, which culminates in Cowley; the fourth, in Dryden and the French school; the fifth, the return to nature in Cowper and his successors of our day. These five rings mark the age of the fair and stingless serpent we are impelled, like the ancient mariner, to bless—but not 'unaware.' *Ah benedicite!* we bless her so, out of our Chaucer's rubric, softly, but with a plainiveness of pleasure! For when the last echo of the Elizabethan harmonies had died away with Shirley's footsteps, in the twilight of that golden day; when Mabington and Lovelace, and every last bird before nightfall was dumb, and Crashaw's fine rapture, holy as a summer sense of silence, left us to the stars—the first voices startling the thinker from his reverting thoughts are verily of another spirit. The voices are eloquent enough, thoughtful enough, fanciful enough; but something is defective. Can any one suffer, as an experimental reader, the transition between the second and third periods, without feeling that something is defective? What is so? And who dares to guess that it may be INSPIRATION?

#### IV

'POETRY is of too spiritual a nature,' Mr. Campbell has observed, 'to admit of its authors being exactly grouped by a Linnaean system of classification.' Nevertheless, from those subtle influences which poets render and receive, and from other causes less obvious but no less operative, it has resulted, even to ourselves in this slight survey of the poets of our country, that the signs used by us simply as signs of historical de-

marcation have naturally fallen or risen into signs of poetical classification. The five eras we spoke of in our last paper have each a characteristic as clear in poetry as in chronology; and a deeper gulf than an *Anna Domini* yawns betwixt an Elizabethan man and a man of that third era upon which we are entering. The change of the poetical characteristic was not, indeed, without gradation. The hands of the clock had been moving silently for a whole hour before the new one struck—and even in Davies, even in Drayton, we felt the cold foreshadow of a change. The word ‘sweetness,’ which presses into our sentences against the will of our rhetoric whenever we speak of Shakespeare (‘sweetest Shakespeare’) or his kin, we lose the taste of in the later waters—they are brackish with another age.

In what did the change consist? Practically and partially in the idol-worship of *rime*. Among the elder poets, the rime was only a felicitous adjunct, a musical accompaniment, the tinkling of a cymbal through the choral harmonies. You heard it across the changes of the pause, as an undertone of the chant, marking the time with an audible indistinctness, and catching occasionally and reflecting the full light of the emphasis of the sense in mutual elucidation. But the new practice endeavoured to identify in all possible cases the rime and what may be called the sentimental emphasis; securing the latter to the tenth riming syllable, and so dishonouring the emphasis of the sentiment into the base use of the marking of the time. And not only by this unnatural provision did the emphasis minister to the rime, but the pause did so also. ‘Away with all pauses,’ said the reformers, ‘except the legitimate pause at the tenth riming syllable. O rime, live for ever! Rime alone take the incense from our altars—tinkling cymbal alone be our music!’—And so arose, in dread insignificance, ‘the heart and impart men.’

Moreover, the corruption of the versification was but a type of the change in the poetry itself, and sufficiently ex-

pressive. The accession to the throne of the poets, of the *wits* in the new current sense of the term, or of the *beaux esprits*—a term to be used the more readily because descriptive of the actual pestilential influence of French literature—was accompanied by the substitution of elegant thoughts for poetic conceptions (‘elegant,’ alas! beginning to be the critical pass-word), of adroit illustrations for beautiful images, of ingenuity for genius. Yet this third era is only the preparation for the fourth consummating one—the hesitation before the crime—we smell the blood through it in the bath-room. And our fancy grows hysterical, like poor Octavia, while the dismal extent of the *quantum mutatus* develops itself in detail.

‘Waller’s sweetness!’ it is a needy antithesis to Denham’s strength—and, if anything beside, a sweetness as far removed from that which we have lately recognized, as the saccharine of the palate from the melodious of the ear. Will Saccharissa frown at our comparison from the high sphere of his verse? or will she, a happy ‘lady who can sleep when she pleases,’ please to oversleep our offence? It is certain that we but walk in her footsteps in our disdain of her poet, even if we disdain him—and most seriously we disown any such partaking of her ‘crueltie.’ Escaping from the first astonishment of an unhappy transition, and from what is still more vexing, those ‘base, common, and popular’ critical voices, which, in and out of various ‘arts of poetry,’ have been pleased to fix upon this same transitional epoch as the genesis of excellence to our language and versification, we do not, we hope it of ourselves, undervalue Waller. There is a certain grace ‘beyond the reach of art,’ or rather beyond the destructive reach of his ideas of art, to which, we opine, if he had not been a courtier and a renegade, the Lady Dorothea might have bent her courtly head unabashed, even as the Penshurst beeches did. We gladly acknowledge

in him, as in Denham and other poets of the transition, an occasional remorseful recurrence by half lines and whole lines, or even a few lines together, to the poetic past. We will do anything but agree with Mr. Hallam, who, in his excellent and learned work on *The Literature of Europe*, has passed some singular judgements upon the poets, and none more startling than his comparison of Waller to Milton, on the ground of the sustenance of power. The crying truth is louder than Mr. Hallam, and cries, in spite of fame, with whom poor Waller was an *enfant trouvé*, an heir by chance, rather than merit—that he is feeble poetically quite as surely as morally and politically, and that, so far from being an equal and sustained poet, he has not strength for unity even in his images, nor for continuity in his thoughts, nor for adequacy in his expression, nor for harmony in his versification. This is at least our strong and sustained impression of Edmund Waller.

With a less natural gift of poetry than Waller, Denham has not only more strength of purpose and language (an easy superiority), but some strength in the abstract: he puts forth rather a sinewy hand to the new structure of English versification. It is true, indeed, that in his only poem which survives to any competent popularity—his *Cooper's Hill*—we may find him again and again, by an instinct to a better principle, receding to the old habit of the medial pause, instead of the would-be sufficiency of the final one. But, generally, he is true to his modern sect of the Pharisees; and he helps their prosperity otherwise by adopting that pharisaic fashion of setting forth, vaingloriously, a little virtue of thought and poetry in pointed and antithetic expression, which all the wits delighted in, from himself, a chief originator, to Pope, the perfecter. The famous lines, inheriting by entail a thousand critical admirations—

Strong without rage, without o'erflowing full,  
and, as Sydney Smith might put it,

'a great many other things, without a great many other things,' contain the germ and prophecy of the whole Queen Anne's generation. For the rest, we will be brief in our melancholy, and say no more of Denham than that he was a Dryden *in small*.

The genius of the new school was its anomaly, even Abraham Cowley. We have said nothing of 'the metaphysical poets' because we disclaim the classification, and believe with Mr. Leigh Hunt that every poet, inasmuch as he is a poet, is a metaphysician. In taking note, therefore, of this Cowley, who stands on the very vibratory soil of the transition, and stretches his faltering and protesting hands on either side to the old and to the new, let no one brand him for 'metaphysics.' He was a true poet, both by natural constitution and cultivation, but without the poet's heart. His admirers have compared him to Pindar—and, taking Pindar out of his rapture, they may do so still: he was a Pindar writing by *métier* rather than by *verve*. In rapidity and subtlety of the associative faculty, which, however, with him, moved circularly rather than onward, he was sufficiently Pindaric: but, as it is a fault in the Greek lyrist to leave his buoyancy to the tumultuous rush of his associations too unmisgivingly and entirely for the right reverence of Unity in Beauty, so is it the crime of the English poet to commit coldly what the other permitted passively, and with a conscious volition, quick yet calm, calm when quickest, to command from the ends of the universe the associations of material sciences and spiritual philosophies. Quickness of the associative or suggestive faculty is common, we have had occasion to observe, to the wit (in the modern sense) and the poet—its application only being of a reverse difference. Cowley confounded the application, and became a witty poet. The Elizabethan writers were inclined to a too curious illuminating of thought by imagery. Cowley was coarsely curious: he went to the shambles for his cham-

bers of imagery, and very often through the mud. All which faults appear to us attributable to his coldness of temperament, and his defectiveness in the instinct towards Beauty; to having the intellect only of a great poet, not the sensibility. His *Davidis*, our first epic in point of time, has fine things in it. His translations (or rather paraphrases) of Anacreon are absolutely the most perfect of any English composition of their order. His other poems contain profuse material, in image and reflection, for the accomplishment of three poets, each greater than himself. He approached the beautiful and the true as closely as mere Fancy could; but that very same Fancy, unfixed by feeling, too often, in the next breath, approximated him to the hideous and the false. Noble thoughts are in Cowley—we say noble, and we might say sublime; but, while we speak, he falls below the first praise. Yet his influence was for good rather than for evil, by inciting to a struggle backward, a delay in the revolutionary movement: and this, although a wide gulf yawned between him and the former age, and his heart's impulse was not strong enough to cast him across it. For his actual influence, he lifts us up and casts us down—charms, and goes nigh to disgust us—does all but make us love and weep.

And then came 'glorious John,' with the whole fourth era in his arms—and eloquent above the sons of men, to talk down, thunder down poetry as if it were an exhalation. Do we speak as if he were not a poet? nay, but we speak of the character of his influences! nay, but he was a poet—an excellent poet—in marble! and Phidias, with the sculptural ideal separated from his working tool, might have carved him. He was a poet without passion, just as Cowley was—but, then, Cowley lived by fancy, and that would have been poor living for John Dryden. Unlike Cowley, too, he had an earnestness which of itself was influential. He was inspired in his understanding and his senses only; but to the point of dis-

enchancing the world most marvellously. He had a large soul for a man, containing sundry Queen Anne's men, one within another, like quartetto tables; but it was not a large soul for a poet, and it entertained the universe by potato patches. He established finally the reign of the literati for the reign of the poets—and the critics clapped their hands. He established finally the despotism of the final emphasis—and no one dared, in affecting criticism, to speak any more at all against a tinkling cymbal. And so, in distinctive succession to poetry and inspiration, began the new system of harmony 'as by law established'—and so he translated Virgil not only into English but into Dryden; and so he was kind enough to translate Chaucer too, as an example—made him a much finer speaker, and not, according to our doxy, so good a versifier—and cured the readers of the old 'Knight's Tale' of sundry of their tears!—and so he reasoned powerfully in verse—and threw into verse, besides, the whole force of his strong sensual being; and so he wrote what has been called from generation to generation, down to the threshold of our days, 'the best ode in the English language.' To complete which successes he thrust out nature with a fork; and for a long time, and in spite of Horace's prophecy, she never came back again. Do we deny our gratitude and his glory to glorious John because we speak thus? In nowise would we do it. He was a man greatly endowed; and our language and our literature remain, in certain respects, the greater for his greatness—more practical, more rapid, and with an air of mixed freedom and adroitness which we welcome as an addition to the various powers of either. With regard to his influence—and he was most influential upon POETRY—we have spoken; and have the whole of the opening era from which to prove.

While we return upon our steps for a breathing moment, and pause before Milton, the consideration occurs to us that a person of historical ignorance in respect to this divine poet would hesitate

and be at a loss to which era of our poetry to attach him through the internal evidence of his works. He has not the tread of a contemporary of Dryden, and Rochester's *nothingness* is a strange accompaniment to the voice of his greatness. Neither can it be quite predicated of him that he walks an Elizabethan man—there is a certain fine bloom or farina, rather felt than seen, upon the old poems, unrecognized upon his. But the love of his genius leant backward to those olden oracles: and it is pleasant to think that he was actually born before Shakespeare's death; that they too looked upwardly to the same daylight and stars; and that he might have stretched his baby arms (*animosus infans*) to the faint hazel eyes of the poet of poets. Let us think in any wise that he drew in some living subtle Shakespearian benediction, providing for greatness.

The Italian poets had 'raided influence' on the Elizabethan 'field of the cloth of gold'; and from the Italian poets, as well as the classical sources and the elder English ones, did Milton accomplish his soul. Yet the poet Milton was not made by what he received; not even by what he loved. High above the current of poetical influences he held his own grand personality; and there never lived poet in any age (unless we assume ignorantly of Homer) more isolated in the contemporaneous world than he. He was not worked upon from out of it, nor did he work outwardly upon it. As Cromwell's secretary and Salmasius's antagonist, he had indeed an audience; but as a poet, a scant one; his music, like the spherical tune, being inaudible because too fine and high. It is almost awful to think of him issuing from the arena of controversy victorious and *blind*—putting away from his dark brows the bloody laurel—left alone after the heat of the day by those for whom he had combated; and originating in that enforced dark quietude his epic vision for the inward sight of the unborn; so to avenge himself on the world's neglect by exacting

from it an eternal future of reminiscence. The circumstances of the production of his great work are worthy in majesty of the poem itself; and the writer is the ideal to us of the majestic personality of a poet. He is the student, the deep thinker, the patriot, the believer, the thorough brave man—breathing freely for truth and freedom under the leaden weights of his adversities, never reproaching God for his griefs by his despair, working in the chain, praying without ceasing in the serenity of his sightless eyes; and, because the whole visible universe was swept away from betwixt them and the Creator, contemplating more intently the invisible infinite, and shaping all his thoughts to it in grander proportion! O noble Christian poet! Which is hardest? self-renunciation, and the sackcloth and the cave? or grief-renunciation, and the working on, on, under the stripe? He did what was hardest. He was Agonistes building up, instead of pulling down; and his high religious fortitude gave a character to his works. He stood in the midst of those whom we are forced to consider the corrupt verifiers of his day, an iconoclast of their idol rime, and protesting practically against the sequestration of pauses. His lyrical poems, move they ever so softly, step loftily, and with something of an epic air. His sonnets are the first sonnets of a free rhythm—and this although Shakespeare and Spenser were sonneteers. His *Comus*, and *Samson*, and *Lycidas*—how are we to praise them? His epic is the second to Homer's, and the first in sublime effects—a sense as of divine benediction flowing through it from end to end. Not that we compare, for a moment, Milton's genius with Homer's; but that Christianity is in the poem besides Milton. If we hazard a remark which is not admiration, it shall be this—that with all his heights and breadths (which we may measure geometrically if we please from the *Davidels* of Cowley), with all his rapt devotions and exaltations towards the highest of all, we do miss

something—we, at least, who are writing miss something—of what may be called, but rather metaphysically than theologically, *spirituality*. His spiritual personages are vast enough, but not rarefied enough. They are humanities, enlarged, uplifted, transfigured—but no more. In the most spiritual of his spirits there is a conscious, obvious, even ponderous materialism. And hence comes the celestial gunpowder, and hence the clashing with swords, and hence the more continuous evil which we feel better than we describe, the thick atmosphere clouding the heights of the subject. And if anybody should retort, that complaining so we complain of Milton's humanity—we shake our heads. For Shakespeare also was a *man*; and our creed is, that the *Midsummer Night's Dream* displays more of the fairyhood of fairies than the *Paradise Lost* does of the angelhood of angels. The example may serve the purpose of explaining our objection; both leaving us room for the one remark more—that Ben Jonson and John Milton, the most scholastic of our poets, brought out of their scholarship different gifts to our language; that Jonson brought more Greek, and Milton more Latin—while the influences of the latter and greater poet were at once more slowly and more extensively effectual.

Butler was the contemporary of Milton: we confess a sort of continuous 'innocent surprise' in the thought of it, however the craziness of our imagination may be in fault. We have stood by as witnesses while the great poet sanctified the visible earth with the oracle of his blindness; and are startled that a profane voice should be hardy enough to break the echo, and jest in the new consecrated temple. But this is rather a roundheaded than a longheaded way of adverting to poor Butler; who, for all his gross injustice to the purer religionists, in the course of 'flattering the vices and daubing the iniquities' of King Charles's court, does scarcely deserve at our hands, either to be treated as a poet or punished for being

a contemporary of the poet Milton. Butler's business was the business of desecration, the exact reverse of a poet's; and by the admission of all the world his business is well done. His learning is various and extensive, and his fancy communicates to it its mobility. His wit has a gesture of authority, as if it might, if it pleased, be wisdom. His power over language, 'tattered and ragged' like Skelton's, is as wonderful as his power over images. And if nobody can commend the design of his *Hudibras*, which is the English counterpart of *Don Quixote*—a more objectionable servility than an adaptation from a serious composition, in which case that humorous effect would have been increased by the travesty, which is actually injured, and precisely in an inverse ratio, by the burlesque copy of the burlesque—everybody must admit the force of the execution. When Prior attempted afterwards the same line of composition with his peculiar grace and airiness of diction—when Swift ground society into jests with a rougher turning of the wheel—still, then and since, has this Butler stood alone. He is the genius of his class—a natural enemy to poetry under the form of a poet: not a great man, but a powerful man.

## V

We return to the generation of Dryden and to Pope his inheritor—Pope, the perfecter, as we have already taken occasion to call him—who stood in the presence of his father Dryden, before that energetic soul, weary with its long literary work which was not always clean and noble, had uttered its last wisdom or foolishness through the organs of the body. Unfortunately, Pope had his advisers apart from his muses; and their counsel was 'be correct.' To be correct, therefore, to be great through correctness, was the end of his ambition, an aspiration scarcely more calculated for the production of noble poems than the philosophy of utilitarianism is for that of lofty virtues. Yet correctness seemed

a virtue rare in the land; Dr. Johnson having crowned Lord Roscommon over Shakespeare's head, 'the only correct writer before Addison'! The same critic predicated of Milton, that he could not cut figures upon cherry-stones—Pope glorified correctness, and dedicated himself to cherry-stones from first to last. A cherry-stone was the apple of his eye.

Now we are not about to take up any popular cry against Pope; he has been over-praised and is under-praised; and, in the silence of our poetical experience, ourselves may confess personally to the guiltiness of either extremity. He was not a great poet; he meant to be a correct poet, and he was what he meant to be, according to his construction of the thing meant—there are few amongst us who fulfil so literally their ambitions. Moreover, we will admit to our reader in the confessional, that, however convinced in our innermost opinion of the superiority of Dryden's genius, we have more pleasure in reading Pope than we ever could enjoy or imagine under Pope's master. We incline to believe that Dryden being the greatest poet-power, Pope is the best poet-manual; and that whatever Dryden has done—we do not say conceived, we do not say suggested, but DONE—Pope has done that thing better. For translations, we hold up Pope's Homer against Dryden's Virgil and the world. Both translations are utterly and equally contrary to the antique, both bad with the same sort of excellence; but Pope's faults are Dryden's faults, while Dryden's are not Pope's. We say the like of the poems from Chaucer; we say the like of the philosophic and satirical poems: the art of reasoning in verse is admirably attained by either poet, but practised with more grace and point by the later one. To be sure, there is the *Alexander's Feast* ode, called, until people half believed what they said, the greatest ode in the language! But here is, to make the scales even again, the *Eloisa*, with tears on it—faulty but tender—of a sensibility which glorious

John was not born with a heart for. To be sure, it was not necessary that John Dryden should keep a Bolingbroke to think for him: but to be sure again, it is something to be born with a heart, particularly for a poet. We recognize besides, in Pope, a delicate fineness of tact, of which the precise contrary is unpleasantly obvious in his great master; Horace Walpole's description of Selwyn, *une bête inspirée*, with a restriction of *bête* to the animal sense, fitting glorious John like his crown. Now there is nothing of this coarseness of the senses about Pope; the little pale Queen Anne's valetudinarian had a nature fine enough to stand erect upon the point of a needle like a schoolman's angel; and whatever he wrote coarsely, he did not write from inward impulse, but from external conventionality, from a bad social Swift-sympathy. For the rest, he carries out his master's principles into most excellent and delicate perfection: he is rich in his degree. And there is, indeed, something charming even to an enemy's ear in this exquisite balancing of sounds and phrases, these 'shining rows' of oppositions and appositions, this glorifying of commonplaces by antithetic processes, this catching, in the rebound, of emphasis upon rime and rime; all, in short, of this Indian jugglery and Indian carving upon . . . cherry-stones!—'and she herself' (that is, poetry)—

And she herself one fair Antithesis.

When Voltaire threw his *Henriade* into the fire and Hénault rescued it, 'Souvenez-vous,' said the president to the poet, 'that I burnt my lace ruffles for the sake of your epic.' It was about as much as the epic was worth. For our own part, we would sacrifice not only our point, but the prosperity of our very fingers, to save from a similar catastrophe these works of Pope; and this, although the most perfect and original of all of them, *The Rape of the Lock*, had its fortune in a fire-safe. They are the works of a master. A great poet?—oh no! A true poet?—perhaps not. Yet a man, be it remembered, of

such mixed gracefulness and power, that Lady Mary Wortley deigned to coquet with him, and Dennis shook before him in his shoes.

Nature, as we have observed, had been expelled by a fork, under the hand of Pope's progenitors; and if in him and around him we see no sign of her return, we do not blame Pope for what is, both in spirit and in form, the sin of his school. Still less would we 'play at bowles' with Byron, and praise his right use of the right poetry of Art. Our views of Nature and of Art have been sufficiently explained to leave our opinion obvious of the controversy in question, in which, as in a domestic broil, 'there were faults on both sides.' Let a poet never write the words 'tree,' 'hill,' 'river,' and he may still be true to nature. Most untrue, on the other hand, most narrow, is the poetical sectarianism, and essentially most unpoetical, which stands among the woods and fields announcing with didactic phlegm, 'Here only is nature.' Nature is where God is! Poetry is where God is! Can you go up or down or around and not find Him? In the loudest hum of your machinery, in the dunnest volume of your steam, in the foulest street of your city—there, as surely as in the Brocken pine-woods and the watery thunders of Niagara—there, as surely as He is above all, lie Nature and Poetry in full life. Speak, and they will answer! Nature is a large meaning! Let us make column-room for it in the comprehension of our love! for the coral rock built up by the insect and the marble erected by the man.

In this age of England, however, pet-named the Augustan, there was no room either for Nature or Art: Art and Nature (for we will not separate their names) were at least maimed and dejected and sickening day by day—

Quoth she, I grieve to see your leg  
Stuck in a hole here, like a peg;

and even so, or like the peg of a top humming drowsily, our poetry stood still. There was an abundance of 'correct writers,' yes, and of 'elegant

writers': there was Parnell, for instance, who would be called besides a pleasing writer by any pleasing critic; and Addison, a proverb for the 'virtuousest, discreetest, best' with all the world. Or if, after the Scotch mode of Monkbarns, we call our poets by their possessions, not so wronging their characteristics, there was *The Dispensary*, the *Art of Preserving Health*, the *Art of Cookery*,—and *Trivia*, or the *Fan*—take Gay by either of those names! and *Cider*, or the *Splendid Shilling*—take Phillips, Milton's imitator, by either of these! and there was Pomfret, not our 'choice,' the concentrate essence of namby-pambyism; and Prior, a brother spirit of the French Gresset—a half-brother, of an inferior race, yet to be praised by us for one instinct obvious in him, a blind stretching of the hand to a sweeter order of versification than was current. Of Young we could write much: he was the very genius of antithesis; a genius breaking from 'the system,' with its broken chain upon his limbs, and frowning darkly through the grey monotony—a grander writer by spasms than by volitions. Blair was of his class, but rougher; a brawny contemplative Orson. And how many of our readers may be unaware of the underground existence of another *Excursion* than the deathless one of our days, and in blank verse, too, and in several cantos; and how nobody will thank us for digging at these fossil remains! It is better to remember Mallet by his touching ballad of the *William and Margaret*, a word taken from diviner lips to becoming purpose; only we must not be thrown back upon the 'Ballads,' lest we wish to live with them for ever. Our literature is rich in ballads, a form epitomical of the epic and dramatic, and often vocal when no other music is astir; and to give a particular account of which would take us far across our borders.

As it is, we are across them; we are benighted in our wandering and straitened for room. We glance back vainly to the lights of the later drama, and see Dryden, who had the heart to write

rimed plays after Shakespeare, and but little heart for anything else,—and Congreve, and Lillo, and Southerne, and Rowe, all gifted writers, and Otway, master of tears, who starved in our streets for his last tragedy—a poet most effective in broad touches; rather moving, as it appears to us, by scenes than by words.

Returning to the general poets, we meet, with bent faces toward hillside Nature, Thomson and Dyer; in writing which names together we do not depreciate Thomson's, however we may a little exalt Dyer's. We praise neither of these writers for being descriptive poets; but for that faithful transcript of their own impressions, which is a common subject of praise in both—Dyer being more distinct, perhaps, in his images, and Thomson more impressive in his general effect. Both are faulty in their blank-verse diction; the latter too florid and verbose, the former (although *Grongar Hill* is simple almost to baldness) too pedantic and *constructive*—far too 'saponaceous' and 'pomaceous.' We offer pastoral salutation also to Shenstone and Hammond; pairing them like Polyphemus's sheep; fain to be courteous if we could: and we *could* if we were *Phyllida*. Surely it is an accomplishment to utter a pretty thought so simply that the world is forced to remember it; and that gift was Shenstone's, and he the most poetical of country gentlemen. May every shrub on the lawn of Leasowes be ever-green to his brow. And next, O most patient reader, pressed to a conclusion and in a pairing humour, we come to Gray and Akenside together—yes, together! because if Gray had written a philosophic poem he would have written it like the *Pleasures of Imagination*, and because Akenside would have written odes like Gray, if he could have commanded a rapture. Gray, studious and sitting in the cold, learnt the secret of a simulated and innocent fire (the Greek fire he might have *called* it), which burns beautifully to the eye, but never would have harmed M. Hénault's ruffles. Collins had twenty times the lyric genius

of Gray; we feel his fire in our cheeks. But Gray, but Akenside—both with a volition towards enthusiasm—have an under-constitution of most scholastic coldness: *Sicis me flere*, you must weep; but they only take out their pocket-handkerchiefs. We confess humbly, before gods and men, that we never read to the end of Akenside's *Pleasures*, albeit we have read Plato: some pleasures, say the moralists, are more trying than pains. Let us turn for refreshment to Goldsmith—that amiable genius, upon whose diadem we feel our hands laid ever and anon in familiar love,—to Goldsmith, half emerged from 'the system,' his forehead touched with the red ray of the morning; a cordial singer. Even Johnson, the ponderous critic of the system, who would hang a dog if he read *Lycidas* twice, who wrote the lives of the poets and left out the poets, even he loved Goldsmith! and Johnson was Dryden's critical bear—a rough bear, and with points of noble beardom. But while he growled the leaves of the greenwood fell; and oh, how sick to faintness grew the poetry of England! Anna Seward, 'by'r lady,' was the 'muse' of those days, and Mr. Hayley 'the bard,' and Hannah More wrote our dramas, and Helen Williams our odes, and Rosa Matilda our elegiacs,—and Blacklock, blind from his birth, our descriptive poems, and Mr. Whalley our 'domestic epics,' and Darwin our poetical philosophy, and Lady Millar encouraged literature at Bath, with red taffeta and 'the vase.' But the immortal are threatened vainly. It was the sickness of renewal rather than of death; St. Leon had his fainting hand on the elixir: the new era was alive in Cowper. We do not speak of him as the master of a transition, only as a hinge on which it slowly turned; only as an earnest, tender writer, and true poet enough to be true to himself. Cowper sang in England, and Thomas Warton also—of a weaker voice but in tune: and Beattie, for whom we have too much love to analyse it, seeing that we drew our childhood's first poetic pleasure from his

*Minstrel.* And Burns walked in glory on the Scotch mountain's side; and everywhere Dr. Percy's collected ballads were sowing the great hearts of some still living for praise with impulses of greatness. It was the revival of poetry—the opening of the fifth era—the putting down of the Dryden dynasty—the breaking of the serf bondage—the wrenching of the iron from the soul. And Nature and Poetry did embrace one another! and all men who were lovers of either and of our beloved England were enabled to resume the pride of their consciousness, and looking round the world say gently, yet gladly, 'OUR POETS.'

VI<sup>1</sup>

WHEN Mr. Wordsworth gave his first poems to the public it was not well with poetry in England. The 'system' riveted upon the motions of poetry by Dryden and his dynasty had gradually added to the restraint of slavery its weakness and emasculation. The change from poetry to rhetoric had issued in another change, to the commonplaces of rhetoric. We had no longer to complain of Pope's antithetic glories—there was 'a vile antithesis' for those also. The followers were not as the master; and the very facility with which the trick of acoustical mechanics was caught up by the former—admitting of 'singing for the million,' with ten fingers each for natural endowment, and the ability to count them for requirement—made wider and more apparent the difference of dignity between the Popes and the Pope Joans. Little by little, by slow and desolate degrees, Thought had perished out of the way of the appointed and most beaten rhythm; and we had the beaten rhythm, without the living footstep—we had the monotony of the military movement, without the heroic impulse—the cross of the Legion of Honour, hung, as

it once was, in a paroxysm of converted Bourbonism, at a horse's tail; and the 'fork,' which expelled Nature, dropped feebly downward, blunted of its point. And oh! to see who sat then in England in the seats of the elders! The Eliza! bethan men would have gnashed their teeth at such a sight; the Queen Anne's men would have multiplied Dunciads. Of the third George's men ('*Ἀχαιῖδες οὐκ ἔρ' Ἀχαιοί*'), Hayley, too good a scholar to bear to be so bad a poet, was a chief hope; and Darwin, mistaker of the optic nerve for the poetical sense, an inventive genius.

But Cowper had a great name, and Burns a greater; and the *réveille* of Dr. Percy's *Reliques of English Poetry* was echoed presently by the *Scottish Minstrelsy*. There was a change—a revival, an awakening—a turning, at least upon the pillow, of some who slept on in mediocrity, as if they felt the daylight on their shut eyelids: there was even a group of noble hearts (Coleridge, the idealist, poet among poets, in their midst), foreseeing the sun. Nature, the long banished, re-dawned like the morning—Nature, the true mother, cried afar off to her children, 'Children, I am here!—come to me.' It was a hard act to come, and involved the learning and the leaving of much. Conventionalities of phrase and rhythm, conventional dialects set apart for poets, conventional words, attitudes, and manners, consecrated by 'wits,'—all such Nessian trappings were to be wrenched off, even to the cuticle into which they had urged their poison. But it was an act not too hard for the doing. There was a visible movement towards Nature; the majority moving of course with reservation, but individuals with decision; some rending downward their garments of pestilent embroidery, and casting themselves at her feet. As the chief of the movement, the Xenophon of the return, we are bound to acknowledge this great Wordsworth, and to admire how, in a bravery bravest of all because born of love, in a passionate unreservedness sprung of genius, and to the actual scandal of the

<sup>1</sup> Originally published in the *Athenaeum*, Aug. 27, 1842, as a review on Wordsworth's *Poems, chiefly of early and late years, including The Borderers, a Tragedy*.

world which stared at the filial familiarity, he threw himself not at the feet of Nature, but straightway and right tenderly upon her bosom! And so, trustfully as child before mother, self-renouncingly as child after sin, absorbed away from the consideration of publics and critics as child at play-hours, with a simplicity startling to the *blasé* critical ear as inventiveness, with an innocent utterance felt by the competent thinker to be wisdom, and with a faithfulness to natural impressions acknowledged since by all to be the highest art—this William Wordsworth did sing his *Lyrical Ballads* where the 'Art of criticism' had been sung before, and 'the world would not let them die.'

The voice of Nature has a sweetness which few of us, when sufficiently tried, can gainsay; it penetrates our artificial 'tastes,' and overcomes us; and our ignorance seldom proves strong in proportion to our instincts. We recognize, like Ulysses' dog, with feeble joyous gesture the master's voice—and the sound is nearly always pleasant to us, however we may want strength to follow after it. But while, at the period we refer to, the recognition and gratulation were true and deep, the old conventionalities and prejudices hung heavily in bondage and repression. The great body of readers would recoil to the Drydenic rhythm, to the Queen Anne's poetical cant, to anti-Saxonisms, whether in Latin or French; or exacted, as a condition of a poet's faithfulness to Nature, such an effervescence of his emotions as had rendered Pope natural in the *Eloisa*. 'Let us all forsooth be *Eloisa*, and so natural,'—the want was an excuse for loving Nature; and the opinion went that the daily heart-beat was more obnoxious in poetry than the incidental palpitation. Poor Byron (true miserable genius, soul-blind great poet!) ministered to this singular need, identifying poetry and passion. Poetry ought to be the revelation of the complete man—and Byron's manhood having no completion nor entirety, consisting on the contrary of a one-sided

passionateness, his poems discovered not a heart, but the wound of a heart; not humanity, but disease; not life, but a crisis. It was not so—it was not in the projection of a passionate emotion—that William Wordsworth committed himself to Nature, but in full resolution and determinate purpose. He is scarcely, perhaps, of a passionate temperament, although still less is he cold; rather quiet in his love, as the stock-dove, and brooding over it as constantly, and with as soft an inward song lapsing outwardly—serene through deepness—saying himself of his thoughts, that they 'do often lie too deep for tears'; which does not mean that their painfulness will not suffer them to be wept for, but that their closeness to the supreme Truth hallows them, like the cheek of an archangel, from tears. Call him the very opposite of Byron, who, with narrower sympathies for the crowd, yet stood nearer to the crowd, because everybody understands passion. Byron was a poet through pain. Wordsworth is a feeling man because he is a thoughtful man; he knows grief itself by a reflex emotion; by sympathy, rather than by suffering. He is eminently and humanly expansive; and, spreading his infinite egotism over all the objects of his contemplation, reiterates the love, life, and poetry of his peculiar being in transcribing and chanting the material universe, and so sinks a broad gulf between his descriptive poetry and that of the Darwinian painter-poet school. Darwin was, as we have intimated, all optic nerve. Wordsworth's eye is his soul. He does not see that which he does not intellectually discern, and he beholds his own cloud-capped Helvellyn under the same conditions with which he would contemplate a grand spiritual abstraction. In his view of the exterior world—as in a human Spinozism—mountains and men's hearts share in a sublime unity of humanity; yet his Spinozism does in nowise affront God, for he is eminently a religious poet, if not, indeed, altogether as generous and capacious in his Christianity as in his

poetry; and, being a true Christian poet, he is scarcely least so when he is not writing directly upon the subject of religion—just as we learn sometimes without looking up, and by the mere colour of the grass, that the sky is cloudless. But what is most remarkable in this great writer is his poetical consistency. There is a wonderful unity in these multiform poems of one man: they are 'bound each to each in natural piety,' even as his days are. And why? because they *are* his days—all his days, work days and Sabbath days—his *life*, in fact, and not the unconnected works of his life, as vulgar men do opine of poetry and do rightly opine of vulgar poems, but the sign, seal, and representation of his life—nay, the actual audible breathing of his inward spirit's life. When Milton said that a poet's life should be a poem he spoke a high moral truth; if he had added a reversion of the saying, that a poet's poetry should be his life, he would have spoken a critical truth, not low.

'Foole, saide my muse to mee, looke in thine heart and write.' And not only, we must repeat, at least times, fast times, or curfew times—not only at times of crisis and emotion, but at all hours of the clock; for that which God thought good enough to write, or permit the writing of, on His book, the heart, is not too common, let us be sure, to write again in the best of our poems. William Wordsworth wrote these common things of nature, and by no means in a phraseology nor in a style. He was daring in his commonness as any of your Tamerlanes may be daring when far fetching an alien image from an outermost world; and, notwithstanding the ribald cry of that *vox populi* which has, in the criticism of poems, so little the character of divinity, and which loudly and mockingly, at his first utterance, denied the sanctity of his simplicities—the Nature he was faithful to 'betrayed not the heart which loved her,' but, finally, justifying herself and him, 'DID'—without the *Edinburgh Review*.

'Hero-worshippers' as we are, and sitting for all the critical pretence—in right or wrong of which we speak at all—at the feet of Mr. Wordsworth,—recognizing him, as we do, as poet-hero of a movement essential to the better being of poetry, as poet-prophet of utterances greater than those who first listened could comprehend, and of influences most vital and expansive—we are yet honest to confess that certain things in the *Lyrical Ballads* which most provoked the ignorant innocent hootings of the mob do not seem to us all heroic. Love, like ambition, may overvault itself; and Betty Foys of the Lake school (so called) may be as subject to conventionalities as Pope's Lady Bettys. And, perhaps, our great poet might, through the very vehemence and nobleness of his hero and prophet-work for Nature, confound, for some blind moment, and by an association easily traced and excused, nature with rusticity, the simple with the bald; and even fall into a vulgar conventionality in the act of spurning a graceful one. If a trace of such confounding may occasionally be perceived in Mr. Wordsworth's earlier poetry, few critics are mad enough, to-day, to catch at the loose straws of the full golden sheaf and deck out withal their own arrogant fronts in the course of mouthing mocks at the poet. The veriest critic of straw knoweth well, at this hour of the day, that if Mr. Wordsworth was ever over-rustic, it was not through incapacity to be right royal; that of all poets, indeed, who have been kings in England, not one has swept the purple with more majesty than this poet, when it hath pleased him to be majestic. *Vivat rex*—and here is a new volume of his reign. Let us rejoice, for the sake of literature and the age, in the popularity which is ready for it, and in the singular happiness of a great poet living long enough to rebound from the 'fell swoop' of his poetical destiny, survive the ignorance of his public, and convict the prejudices of his reviewers. It is a literal 'poetical justice' and one rarest of all, that a

great poet should stand in a permitted sovereignty, without doing so, like poor Inez de Castro, by right of death. It is almost wonderful that his country should clap her hands in praise of him before he has ceased to hear: the applause resembles an anachronism. Is Mr. Wordsworth startled at receiving from his contemporaries what he expected only from posterity?—is he asking himself 'Have I done anything wrong?' Probably not—it is at least with his usual air of calm and advised dignity that he addresses his new volume in its *Envoy*—

Go single,—yet aspiring to be joined  
With thy forerunners, that through many a  
year

Have faithfully prepared each other's way—  
Go forth upon a mission best fulfilled  
When and wherever, in this changeful world,  
*Power hath been given to please for higher  
ends*

*Than pleasure only*; gladdening to prepare  
For wholesome sadness, troubling to refine,  
Calming to raise.

—words of the poet which form a nobler description of the character and uses of his poetry than could be given in any words of a critic.

We do not say that the finest of Mr. Wordsworth's productions are to be found, or should be looked for, in the present volume; but the volume is worthy of its forerunners, consistent in noble earnestness and serene philosophy, true poet's work—the hand trembling not a jot for years or weariness—the full face of the soul turned hopefully and stilly as ever towards the True, and catching across its ridge the idealized sunlight of the Beautiful. And yet if we were recording angel, instead of only recording reviewer, we should drop a tear . . . another . . . and end by weeping out that series of sonnets in favour of capital punishments—moved that a hand which has traced *life-warrants* so long for the literature of England should thus sign a misplaced 'Benedicite' over the hangman and his victim. We turn away from them to other sonnets—to forget aught in Mr.

Wordsworth's poetry we must turn to his poetry!—and however the greatest poets of our country—the Shakespeares, Spensers, Miltons—worked upon high sonnet ground, not one opened over it such broad and pouring sluices of various thought, imagery, and emphatic eloquence as he has done. This is a worthy counsel from one worthy to counsel:—

A poet! he hath put his heart to school,  
Nor dares to move unpropped upon the staff  
Which Art hath lodged within his hand—  
must laugh

By precept only, and shed tears by rule.  
Thy Art be Nature; the live current quaff,  
And let the groveller sip his stagnant pool,  
In fear that else, when Critics grave and cool  
Have killed him, Scorn should write his  
epitaph.

How does the meadow-flower its bloom  
unfold?

Because the lovely little flower is free  
Down to its root, and, in that freedom, bold;  
And so the grandeur of the forest-tree  
Comes not by casting in a formal mould,  
But from its *own* divine vitality.

Here is a sonnet of softer sense, and not less true, referring, we have heard, to a portrait of that lovely 'Lady of her own' which Nature made long ago for herself—and for the poet, we suppose—his sonnet being addressed to the painter:—

All praise the likeness by thy skill portrayed,

But 'tis a fruitless task to paint for me,  
Who, yielding not to changes Time has  
made,

By the habitual light of memory see  
Eyes unbedimmed, see bloom that cannot  
fade,

And smiles that from their birthplace ne'er  
shall flee

Into the land where ghosts and phantoms  
be;

And seeing this, own nothing in its stead.  
Couldst thou go back into far-distant years,  
Or share with me, fond thought! that inward eye,

Then, and then only, Painter, could thy Art  
The visual powers of Nature satisfy,  
Which hold, whate'er to common sight  
appears,

Their sovereign empire in a faithful heart.

The tender Palinodia is beyond Petrarch:—

Though I beheld at first with blank surprise  
This work, I now have gazed on it so long,  
I see its truth with reluctant eyes;  
Oh, my beloved! I have done thee wrong,  
Conscious of blessedness, but, whence it  
springs

Ever too heedless, as I now perceive:  
Morn into noon did pass, noon into eve,  
And the old day was welcome as the young,  
As welcome and as beautiful—in sooth  
More beautiful, as being a thing more holy;  
Thanks to thy virtues, to the eternal youth  
Of all thy goodness, never melancholy;  
To thy large heart and humble mind, that  
cast

Into one vision, future, present, past!

That 'more beautiful' is most beautiful!  
all human love's cunning is in it; besides  
the full glorifying smile of Christian love!

Last in the volume is the tragedy of  
*The Borderers*, which, having lain for  
some fifty years 'unregarded' among  
its author's papers—a singular destiny  
for these printing days when our very  
morning talk seems to fall naturally into  
pica type—caused, in its announcement  
from afar, the most faithful disciples to  
tremble for the possible failure of their  
master. Perhaps they trembled with  
cause. The master, indeed, was a  
prophet of humanity; but he was wiser  
in love than terror, in admiration than  
pity, and rather intensely than actively  
human; capacious to embrace within  
himself the whole nature of things and  
beings, but not going out of himself to  
embrace anything; a poet of one large  
sufficient soul, but not polypsychical  
like a dramatist. Therefore his disciples  
trembled: and we will not say that the  
tragedy, taken as a whole, does not  
justify the fear. There is something  
grand and Greek in the intention which  
hinges it, showing how crime makes  
crime in cursed generation, and how  
black hearts, like whiter ones (Topaze  
or Ebène), do cry out and struggle for  
sympathy and brotherhood; granting  
that black heart (Oswald) may stand  
something too much on the extreme  
of evil to represent humanity broadly  
enough for a drama to turn upon. The

action, too, although it does not, as  
might have been apprehended, lose  
itself in contemplation, has no unhesi-  
tating firm dramatic march—perhaps it  
'potters' a little, to take a word from  
Mrs. Butler;—and when all is done we  
look vainly within us for an impression,  
the response to the unity of the whole.  
But, again, when all is done, the work  
is Mr. Wordsworth's, and the concep-  
tions and utterances living and voiceful  
in it bear no rare witness to the master.  
The old blind man, left to the ordeal  
of the desert—the daughter in agony  
hanging upon the murderer for consola-  
tion—knock against the heart, and take  
back answers; and ever and anon there  
are sweet gushings of such words as this  
poet only knows, showing how, in a  
'late remorse of love,' he relapses into  
pastoral dreams, notwithstanding his  
new vocation, and within the very sight  
of the theatric *thymele*:—

A grove of darker and more lofty shade  
I never saw. The music of the birds  
Drops deadened from a roof so thick with  
leaves.

Who can overpass the image of the old  
innocent man praying!—

The name of daughter on his lips, he prays!  
With nerves so steady, that the very flies  
Sit unmolested on his staff.

And now to give a fragment from  
a scene in which Oswald, the black  
genius of the drama, brings his blackness  
to bear on Marmaduke, who is no genius  
at all. A passage, well known and  
rightly honoured, will be recognized in  
the extract:—

*Osw.* It may be  
That some there are, squeamish half-thinking  
cowards,  
Who will turn pale upon you, call you  
murderer,  
And you will walk in solitude among them.  
A mighty evil for a strong-built mind!—  
Join twenty tapers of unequal height  
And light them joined, and you will see the  
less  
How 'twill burn down the taller; and they all  
Shall prey upon the tallest. Solitude!—  
The Eagle lives in Solitude!  
*Mar.* Even so,

The sparrow so on the house-top, and I,  
The weakest of God's creatures, stand re-  
solved

To abide the issue of my act, alone.

*Osw.* Now would you? and for ever?—

My young friend,

As time advances either we become  
The prey or masters of our own past deeds.  
Fellowship we *must* have, willing or no;  
And if good Angels fail, slack in their duty,  
Substitutes, turn our faces where we may,  
Are still forthcoming; some which, though  
they bear

Ill names, can render no ill services,  
In recompense for what themselves re-  
quired.

So meet extremes in this mysterious world,  
And opposites thus melt into each other.

*Mar.* Time, since Man first drew breath,  
has never moved

With such a weight upon his wings as now;  
But they will soon be lightened.

*Osw.* Aye, look up—

Cast round you your mind's eye, and you  
will learn

Fortitude is the child of Enterprise:  
Great actions move our admiration, chiefly  
Because they carry in themselves an earnest  
That we can suffer greatly.

*Mar.* Very true.

*Osw.* Action is transitory—a step, a blow,  
The motion of a muscle—this way or that—  
'Tis done, and in the after-vacancy  
We wonder at ourselves like men betrayed:  
Suffering is permanent, obscure and dark,  
And shares the nature of infinity.

*Mar.* Truth—and I feel it.

*Osw.* What! if you had bid  
Eternal farewell to unmingled joy  
And the light dancing of the thoughtless  
heart;

It is the toy of fools, and little fit  
For such a world as this. The wise abjure  
All thoughts whose idle composition lives  
In the entire forgetfulness of pain.

—I see I have disturbed you.

*Mar.* By no means.

*Osw.* Compassion!—pity!—pride can do  
without them;  
And what if you should never know them  
more!

He is a puny soul who, feeling pain,  
Finds ease because another feels it too.  
If e'er I open out this heart of mine  
It shall be for a nobler end—to teach  
And not to purchase pining sympathy.  
—Nay, you are pale.

*Mar.* It may be so.

*Osw.* Remorse—

It cannot live with thought; think on, think  
on,

And it will die. What! in this universe,  
Where the least things control the greatest,  
where

The faintest breath that breathes can move  
a world;

What! feel remorse, where, if a cat had  
sneezed,

A leaf had fallen, the thing had never been  
Whose very shadow gnaws us to the vitals<sup>1</sup>.

Anxious to conclude our extracts by  
something truer to Mr. Wordsworth's  
personal opinions<sup>2</sup> than this strong black  
writing we have hesitated, as we turned  
the leaves, before many touching and  
beautiful poems, wise in their beauty—  
before the 'Grave of Burns,' for instance,  
and the 'Widow of Windermere,' and  
the 'Address to the Clouds,' and others  
beyond meaning—a certain sonnet which  
discovers our poet sitting on the chair  
of Dante at Florence, tempting us for  
many reasons. But the sun and air (by  
courtesy) are heavy on us while we  
write, and subdued besides by the charm  
of the loveliest, freshest landscape-  
making (oh, never say *painting*) in the  
world, and by the prospect presently of  
a 'little breeze,' we forget our difficulty  
of breathing and selecting, and fall from  
the elevation of Fahrenheit down in a  
swoon in 'Airey-Force Valley':—

—Not a breath of air

Ruffles the bosom of this leafy glen.  
From the brook's margin, wide around, the  
trees

Are steadfast as the rocks; the brook itself,  
Old as the hills that feed it from afar,  
Doth rather deepen than disturb the calm  
Where all things else are still and motionless.  
And yet, even now, a little breeze, perchance  
Escaped from boisterous winds that rage  
without,

Has entered, by the sturdy oaks unfelt,  
But to its gentle touch how sensitive—  
Is the light ash! that, pendent from the  
brow

Of yon dim cave, in seeming silence makes  
A soft eye-music of slow-waving boughs,  
Powerful almost as vocal harmony  
To stay the wanderer's steps and soothe his  
thoughts.

<sup>1</sup> *The Borderers*, Act III. ll. 1507-67.

But we start from the languor, and the dream floated upon our eyes by such charmed writing, and come hastily to the moral of our story,—seeing that Mr. Wordsworth's life does present a high moral to his generation, to forget which in his poetry would be an unworthy compliment to the latter. It is advantageous for us all, whether poets or poetasters, or talkers about either, to know what a true poet is, what his work is, and what his patience and successes must be, so as to raise the popular idea of these things, and either strengthen or put down the individual aspiration. 'Art,' it was said long ago, 'requires the whole man,' and 'Nobody,' it was said later, 'can be a poet who is anything else'; but the present idea of Art requires the segment of a man, and everybody who is anything at all is a poet in a parenthesis. And our shelves groan with little books over which their readers groan less metaphorically—there is a plague of poems in the land apart from poetry—and many poets who live and are true do not live by their truth, but hold back their full strength from Art because they do not *revere* it fully; and all booksellers cry aloud and do not spare, that poetry will not sell; and certain critics utter melancholy frenzies, that poetry is worn out for ever—as if the morning-star was worn out from heaven, or 'the yellow primrose' from the grass! and Mr. Disraeli the younger, like Bildad comforting Job, suggests that we may content ourselves for the future with a rhythmic prose, printed like prose for decency, and supplied, for comfort, with a parish allowance of two or three rimes to a paragraph. Should there be any whom such a 'New Poor Law' would content, we are far from wishing to disturb the virtue of their serenity—let them continue, like the hypochondriac, to be very sure that they have lost their souls, inclusive of their poetic instincts. In the meantime the hopeful and believing will hope—trust on; and, better still, the Tennysons and the Brownings, and other high-

gifted spirits, will work, wait on, until, as Mr. Horne has said—

Strong deeds awake,  
And, clamouring, through the portals of the hour.

It is well for them and all to count the cost of this life of a master in poetry, and learn from it what a true poet's crown is worth—to recall both the long life's work for its sake—the work of observation, of meditation, of reaching past models into Nature, of reaching past Nature unto God! and the early life's loss for its sake—the loss of the popular cheer, of the critical assent, and of the 'money in the purse.' It is well and full of exultation to remember *now* what a silent, blameless, heroic life of poetic duty this man has lived—how he never cried rudely against the world because he was excluded for a time from the parsley garlands of its popularity; nor sinned morally because he was sinned against intellectually; nor, being tempted and threatened by paymaster and reviewer, swerved from the righteousness and high aims of his inexorable genius. And it cannot be ill to conclude by enforcing a high example by some noble precepts which, taken from the *Musophilus* of old Daniel, do contain, to our mind, the very code of chivalry for poets:—

Be it that my unseasonable song  
Come out of Time, that fault is in the  
Time,  
And I must not do virtue so much wrong,  
As love her aught the worse for other's  
crime.

And for my part, if only one allow  
The care my labouring spirits take in this,  
He is to me a theatre large enow,  
And his applause only sufficient is—  
All my respect is bent but to his brow;  
That is my all, and all I am is his.  
And if some worthy spirits be pleased too,  
It shall more comfort breed, but not more  
will.

BUT WHAT IF NONE? *It cannot yet undo  
The love I bear unto this holy skill.  
This is the thing that I was born to do:  
This is my scene; this part must I fulfil.*

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PRINTED IN ENGLAND  
AT THE OXFORD UNIVERSITY PRESS

